

# A Simple Wayside Flower

Adapted from *The Scarlet Pimpernel* by Willow Skidmore

Setting: 1792, France and England

Cast:

Sir Percy Blakeney/The Scarlet Pimpernel/Cart Driver- Should be very tall. When Cart Driver, the voice should be disguised.: Pretends to be stupid and pompous. Is actually very smart, a force to be reckoned with. He adores his wife, but is cold with her because she has rejected and hurt him in the past.

Lady Marguerite St. Just Blakeney, *his wife*: Very talented and brilliant. Was an actress before her marriage. She often insults Sir Percy because of her frustration with the events of her marriage, and in hopes of breaking his mask.

Armand St. Just, *her brother*: Very loyal to Percy and Marguerite both. Very affectionate. Smart, but a little bit oblivious.

Monsieur Chauvelin, *a French government agent*: Very smart. Strong sadistic streak. Blindly loves and follows all of his superiors in the French Revolution. Believes without question anything he is told by his superiors. Hates the Scarlet Pimpernel for being able to best him.

Prince of Wales: An inane, foppish man. A bit of a non-entity. A society gentleman.

Lord Antony "Tony" Dewhurst: Enthusiastic and boyish. Absolutely loyal to Sir Percy.

Sir Andrew Ffoulkes: More serious than Tony. Also completely loyal to Sir Percy.

Suzanne De Tournay: A girlish young woman. Went to school with Marguerite. Hero-worships the Scarlet Pimpernel, and loves Ffoulkes.

Comtesse De Tournay, *her mother*: Very prejudiced and old-fashioned. A caricature of French aristocracy. Thick French accent.

Vicomte De Tournay, *her brother*: Hot tempered. Also a caricature of the younger French aristocracy. Even thicker accent, doesn't speak English very well.

Chorus, most often as Gossip, a many entitled being. When Gossip, Chorus should always wear black.

(Note: Chorus should interchangeably play the unlisted roles. Unless listed above, all other roles should be played by Chorus as well)

## Act I, Scene 1

*LIGHTS low, with blue spotlights on CHORUS. A blank stage. Enter CHORUS, dressed entirely in black. They take various positions and places on stage, and freeze. The following lines delivered with blank faces, sotto voce, except where marked. Whenever a CHORUS MEMBER speaks, unfreeze.*

1st MEMBER: 1792. France is torn apart for the sake of ideals. (*ringing tone*)  
Liberté-Égalité-Fraternité! (*previous tone*) Hundreds fall to sleep in the embrace of  
Madame la Guillotine daily. (*Move to different position and freeze again.*)

2nd: Madame's victims are beginning to avoid that fond embrace, however. With what spell, you ask? The Scarlet Pimpernel. Though only a simple wayside flower, its sight gives hope to the condemned, and despair to the Committee of Public Safety. (*with distinct irony*) Vive la République! (*Move to different position and freeze again.*)

3rd: Everyone must have entertainment, so 'tis said, and thus are the theaters untouched. The favorite is Marguerite St. Just of the Comédie Française. Crowned "the cleverest woman in Europe," she wants not for friends, talent, or cavaliers. Her current flame is an English nobleman, one Sir Blakeney by name. Rumor brings the news of a wedding on her wings. (*Move to different position and freeze again.*)

4th: The Marquis St. Cyr and his family perish on the Guillotine (*loud, resonant gong. Uncomfortably long pause.*) Sir Percy Blakeney and Marguerite St. Just confirm Rumor's suspicions in a small private wedding. (*LIGHTS down, white spotlight center stage, where SIR PERCY and MARGUERITE are standing.*)

SIR PERCY: From whose mouth then came the denunciation? (*bitter laugh*) Evidently mine own.

MARGUERITE: I was not your wife. This reflects on you not one jot.

SIR PERCY (*low*): Yet you are my wife now, madam. Whatever you chose to do, even if my name was unconnected to yours, now is reflected on me, and mine own honor.

MARGUERITE (*Proudly*): Nay, Sir Percy. If you love me, question me and my actions not. St. Cyr is dead, and quarreling will not bring him back. Believe me when I say I knew not what I did.

SIR PERCY (*Elegant, sweeping bow to her. Coldly*): Far be it from me to question a lady, much less my wife. My words and beliefs are at your disposal.

*LIGHTS back to previous.*

4th (*continues*): And so it begins.

*ALL exit. LIGHTS down into*

## Act I, Scene 2

*LIGHTS up on “The Fisherman’s Rest” in Dover, denoted by a sign, various chairs and tables scattered about, a coat-rack, and a mirror. In the back, there is a door that leads to “upstairs”. The light is red and flickering, indicating a warm fire. Enter FISHERMEN, MR. JELLYBAND, SALLY, FRENCH SPY, and CHAUVELIN. JELLYBAND chats with one of the FISHERMEN. The OTHERS flirt with SALLY, who bustles about with tankards, wine, and other fixations of taverns. CHAUVELIN and FRENCH SPY sit down, and begin unobtrusively playing cards. SALLY gives them a bottle of wine and two glasses, which they leave untouched. They nod their thanks. They listen with amusement. CHAUVELIN has a perpetual sarcastic smile lurking about his mouth.*

JELLYBAND: Such wet weather as we’re havin’. Seems more like April then September. But then, what can you ‘xpect, I says, with sich a government as we’ve got?

FISHERMAN (*nods dolefully*): That’s right, Mr. Jellyband. All them French devils over the Channel is a-murdering their king and nobility, and Mr. Pitt and Mr. Fox and Mr. Burke a-fightin’ and a-wranglin’ between them, if we Englishmen should ‘llow them to go on in their ungodly way. “Let ‘em murder!” says Mr. Pitt. “Stop ‘em!” says Mr. Burke.

*Here SALLY and one of the FISHERMEN attracts JELLYBAND’s notice, having flirted too loudly. He points her off.*

JELLYBAND: Here, go see to my Lord Tony’s supper, and stop fooling with them young jackanapes! If my lord’ supper ain’t the best... If ‘e’s not satisfied... Just see what you’ll get, that’s all.

*SALLY exits reluctantly.*

2nd FISHERMAN (*Not the one SALLY was flirting with*): who’s you ‘xpectin’ tonight, them?

JELLYBAND: Friends of my Lord Tony hisself. Dukes and duchesses from over the water yonder, whom the young lord and his friend, Sir Andrew Ffoulkes, and other young noblemen have helped out of the clutches of them murderin’ devils.

1st FISHERMAN: Why would they do that? Perdon me, Mr. Jellyband, but maybe them Frenchies ‘as some idea as to what they’re doin’.

JELLYBAND (*retorts sarcastically*): Well, maybe you've made friends with some of them French chap 'oo they says is come over here o' purpose to make us Englishmen agree with their murderin' ways! All I know is that there was my friend Peppercorn, 'oo owns the "Blue-Faced Boar," an' as true and loyal an Englishman as you'd see in the land. And now look at 'im!-- 'e made friends with some o' them frog-eaters, 'obnobbed with them just as if they was Englishen, and not just a lot of immoral, Godforsaking furrin spies. Well! And what happened? Peppercorn, 'e now ups and talks of revolutions, and liberty, and down with aristocrats, just like Moosieur Robespierre!

CHAUVELIN (*with a quiet, sarcastic smile*): You seem to think, mine honest friend, that these Frenchmen--spies I think you called them--are mighty clever fellows to have made mincemeat of your friend Peppercorn's opinions. How did they accomplish that now, think you?

JELLYBAND: Lud! I suppose they talked 'im over. Those Frenchies, I've heard it said, 'ave got the gift of gab--and they can just twist some people 'round their little finger, like.

CHAUVELIN: Faith, let us hope, my worthy host, that these clever spies will not succeed in upsetting your extremely loyal opinions.

JELLYBAND (*laughs long and loud*): At me! Hark at that! Did you 'ear 'im say as they'd be upsettin' my opinions?--Eh?-- Lud love you, sir, but you do say some queer things. Why, I wouldn't so much as drink a glass of ale with one o' them murdering Frenchmen, and nothin' 'd make me change my opinions. Why! I've 'eard it said that them frog-eaters can't even speak the King's English, so, of course, if any of 'em tried to speak their God-forsaken lingo to me, why, I should spot them directly, see!--and forewarned is forearmed, as the saying goes.

CHAUVELIN: Aye! My honest friend, I see you are much too sharp, and a match for any twenty Frenchmen, and here's to your very good health, my worthy host, if you'll do me the honour to finish this bottle of mine with me.

JELLYBAND (*wiping tears of laughter from his eyes*): I am sure you're very polite, sir, and I don't mind if I do.

*CHAUVELIN pours out two glasses, hands one to JELLYBAND, who sits next to him, and takes the other.*

CHAUVELIN (*his sarcastic smile widening*): Loyal Englishmen as we all are, we must admit that this (*indicates wine bottle*) is at least one good thing which comes to us from France. (*JELLYBAND smiles and nods*) And here's to the best landlord in England, our worthy host, Mr. Jellyband.

ALL: Hip, hip, hurrah! (*ALL drink*)

JELLYBAND (*with a return of hilarity*): But, just fancy! ME being talked over by any God-forsaken furriner!--What?--Lud love you, sir, but you do say some queer things.

*CHAUVELIN inclines his head, his eyes sparkling with suppressed satisfaction. JELLYBAND stands up and goes to 1st FISHERMEN, and goes back to chatting quietly. FRENCH SPY and CHAUVELIN go back to playing cards. SALLY runs in, breathless with excitement.*

SALLY: I think I see'd my Lord Tony's horse out in the yard, father!

*TONY throws open the door, puts his arm around SALLY's waist, swings her in the air, and kisses her on the forehead.*

TONY: Aye, and bless your bonny eyes for being so sharp, my pretty Sally. Lud, I protest, but you are growing prettier and prettier every time I see you--and my honest friend, Jellyband here, must have hard work to keep the fellows off that be-ribboned waist of yours, eh, Jellyband?

*JELLYBAND gives a shrug and a non-committal grunt. TONY laughs, releases SALLY, and walks over to the coat rack. As he hangs up his coat, he casts a quick, surreptitious, and suspicious look at CHAUVELIN and FRENCH SPY. CHAUVELIN looks blandly back,*

TONY (*turns to JELLYBAND*): Well, Jellyband, and how are things?

JELLYBAND (*with a gusty sigh*): Badly, my lord, badly. But what can you 'xpect with this 'ere government favorin' them rascals over in France, who would murder their king and all their nobility?

TONY: Odd's life! SO they would, at least those they can get ahold of, worse luck! But we have got some friends coming here tonight, who, at any rate, have evaded their clutches. (*He throws an almost defiant look at CHAUVELIN*)

JELLYBAND: Thanks to you, my lord, and to your friends, so I've heard it said.

TONY (*starts, alarmed, and grabs JELLYBAND's arm. Impetuously*): Hush! (*He glances quickly at CHAUVELIN again*)

JELLYBAND (*Reassuringly, almost paternally*): Oh! Lud love you, they are all right, my lord. Don't you be afraid. I wouldn't have spoken, only I knew we were among friends. That gentleman over there (*indicates CHAUVELIN*) is as true and loyal a subject of King George as you are yourself, my lord, saving your presence. He is but lately arrived in Dover, and is settling down in business in these parts.

TONY: In business? Faith, then, it must be as an undertaker, for I vow I never beheld a more rueful countenance. (*General laughter*)

JELLYBAND: Nay, my lord, I believe that the gentleman is a widower, which, no doubt, would account for the melancholy of his bearing--but he is a friend, nevertheless, I'll vouch for that--and you will own, my lord, that who should judge of a face better than the landlord of a popular inn--

TONY (*interrupts*): Oh, that's all right, then, if we are among friends. But, tell me, you have no one else staying here, have you?

JELLYBAND: No one, my lord, and no one coming, either, leastways...

TONY: leastways?

JELLYBAND: No one your lordship would object to, I know.

TONY (*somewhat impatient*): Who is it?

JELLYBAND: Well, my lord, Sir Percy Blakeney and his lady will be here presently, but they ain't a-goin' to stay...

TONY (*faintly astonished*): Lady Blakeney?

JELLYBAND: Aye, my lord. Sir Percy's skipper was here just now. He says that my lady's brother is crossing over to France today in the *Day Dream* which is Sir Percy's yacht, and Sir Percy and my lady will come with him as far as here to see him off. It don't put you out, do it, my lord?

TONY: No, no, it doesn't put me out, friend. Nothing will put me out, unless that supper is not the very best which Miss Sally can cook, and which has ever been served in "The Fisherman's Rest."

*SALLY bustles about, laying the table.*

SALLY: You need have no fear of that, my lord. How many shall I lay for, my lord?

TONY: Five places, pretty Sally, but let the supper be enough for ten at least--our friends will be tired, and, I hope, hungry. As for me, I vow I could demolish a baron of beef tonight.

SALLY (*excitedly*): Here they are, I do believe! (*Horses and carriage wheels can be heard.*)

*FISHERMEN get up, respectfully, and leave. JELLYBAND bustles out to greet them. SALLY primps a bit in the mirror. FRENCH SPY and CHAUVELIN continue their game, and don't even glance around.*

SIR ANDREW FFOULKES (*off*): Straight ahead, Comtesse, the door on your right.

TONY (*joyfully*): Aye, here they are, right enough! Off with you, my pretty Sally, and see how quickly you can dish up the soup.

*SALLY runs off after flashing a charming smile at TONY. JELLYBAND opens the door and pompously bows in COMTESSE DE TOURNAY, SUZANNE DE TOURNAY, VISCOMTE DE TOURNAY, and SIR ANDREW FFOULKES. Sadness and wariness lurks in the DE TOURNAY's eyes, especially those of COMTESSE.*

TONY (*coming forward, effusive*): Welcome! Welcome to old England!

COMTESSE: Ah, you are Lord Antony Dewhurst, I think.

TONY: At your service, Madame, Mademoiselle.

*He ceremoniously kisses COMTESSE and SUZANNE's hands. He then turns to VICOMTE and SIR ANDREW. He bows to VICOMTE, and warmly shakes FFOULKES's hand. SALLY helps SUZANNE and COMTESSE out of their traveling cloaks, and hangs them up. She then bustles off.*

COMTESSE: Ah! Messieurs, what can I say?

TONY: Only that you are glad to be in England, Comtesse, and that you have not suffered too much from your trying voyage.

COMTESSE (*with feeling*): Indeed, indeed, we are glad to be in England, and we have already forgotten all that we have suffered.

TONY: I hope my friend, Sir Andrew Ffoulkes, proved an entertaining companion, Madame?

COMTESSE (*with a gracious smile*): Ah, indeed, Sir Andrew was kindness itself. How can my children and I ever show enough gratitude to you all, Messieurs?

*SUZANNE looks at SIR ANDREW, just as he looks at her. She lowers her eyes, suddenly shy.*

SUZANNE (*with a charmingly naive curiosity*): So this in England. (*she looks around*)

SIR ANDREW (*smiling*): A bit of it, mademoiselle, but all of it at your service.



*SUZANNE drops her eyes again, and a sweet smile crosses her face. SIR ANDREW watches her with extremely clear admiration.*

TONY: But, I say, supper! Supper, honest Jellyband! Where is that pretty wench of yours and the dish of soup? Zooks, man, while you stand there gaping at the ladies, they will faint with hunger.

JELLYBAND: One moment! One moment, my lord. Sally! Hey, Sally there, are ye ready, my girl?

*SALLY enters, carrying a soup tureen, which she sets in the center of the table.*

TONY: Odd's life, supper at last! *(He holds out his arm to COMTESSE. Ceremoniously)* May I have the honor?

*He leads her to the table, and sits her down. FFOULKES and SUZANNE are oblivious, lost each other's eyes. He takes her hand, and they both smile shyly.*

COMTESSE *(sternly)*: Suzanne.

SUZANNE *(pulls her hands and eyes away. Meekly)*: yes, Mama.

*She and FFOULKES take their places at the table.*

*LIGHTS down.*

*END SCENE.*

## Act I, Scene 3

*LIGHTS up on the party just finishing supper. JELLYBAND and SALLY are waiting on the table. CHAUVELIN stands.*

CHAUVELIN: Goodnight. (*He bows. ALL's attention is on him, and they nod their goodbyes. No one notices as FRENCH SPY slips silently under the table. CHAUVELIN leaves*)

TONY: Alone, at last!

VICOMTE (*raising his glass*): To His Majesty George Three of England. God bless him for his hospitality to us all, poor exiles from France. (*he drinks*)

TONY and FFOULKES (*together, following suit*): His Majesty the King.

FFOULKES (*solemnly*): To His Majesty King Louis of France. May God protect him, and give him victory over his enemies.

*ALL silently and somberly drink this toast.*

TONY (*merrily*): And to Monsieur le Comte de Tournay de Basserive. May we welcome him in England before many days are over.

COMTESSE (*hand shakes as she drinks toast*): Ah, Monsieur, I scarcely dare hope.

TONY: Faith, Madame! Mine was no idle toast; seeing yourself, Mademoiselle Suzanne, and my friend the Vicomte safely in England now, surely you must feel reassured as to the fate of Monsieur le Comte.

COMTESSE (*with a heavy sigh*): Ah, Monsieur, I trust in God--I can but pray--and hope...

FFOULKES: Aye, Madame! Trust in God, by all means, but believe also a little in your English friends, who have sworn to bring the count safely across the Channel, even as they have brought you today.

COMTESSE: Indeed, indeed, Monsieur, I have the fullest confidence in you and your friends. Your fame, I assure you, has spread throughout the whole of France. The way some of my own friends have escaped from the clutches of that awful tribunal was nothing short of a miracle--and all done by you and your friends--

FFOULKES: We were but the hands, Madame le Comtesse--

COMTESSE (*despairingly*): But my husband, Monsieur. He is in such deadly peril--I would never have left him, only... There were my children... I was torn between my duty to him, and to them. They refused to go without me... And you and your friends assured me so solemnly that my husband would be safe. But, oh! Now that I am here--amongst you all--in this beautiful, free England--I think of him, flying for his life, hunted like a poor beast... In such peril... Ah! I should not have left him... I should not have left him!... (*She begins to cry softly. Suzy runs to her, puts her arms around her neck, and comforts her with a kiss. TONY and FFOULKES look sheepish and commiserating.*)

SUZANNE (*looks at FFOULKES with charming confidence*): As for me, Monsieur, I trust you absolutely, and I **know** that you will bring my dear father safely to England, just as you brought us today. (*COMTESSE smiles, hugs SUZANNE, and dries her tears*)

FFOULKES (*enthusiastically*): Nay! You shame me, Mademoiselle. Though my life is at your service, I have been but a humble tool in the hands of our great leader, who organized and affected your escape. (*SUZANNE looks curious*)

COMTESSE (*eagerly*): Your leader, Monsieur? Ah! Of course, you must have a leader. And I did not think of that before! But tell me, where is he? I must go to him at once, and I and my children must throw ourselves at his feet, and thank him for all he has done for us.

TONY: Alas, Madame! That is impossible.

COMTESSE: Impossible--why?

TONY: Because the Scarlet Pimpernel works in the dark, and his identity is only known under the solemn oath of secrecy to his immediate followers.

SUZANNE (*with a gay, pretty little laugh*): The Scarlet Pimpernel? Why! What a droll name! What is the Scarlet Pimpernel, Monsieur?

FFOULKES (*glows with enthusiasm and hero-worship*): The Scarlet Pimpernel, Mademoiselle, is the name of a humble English wayside flower; but it is also the name chosen to hide the identity of the best and bravest man in all the world, so that he may better succeed in accomplishing the noble task he has set himself to do.

VICOMTE: Ah, yes. I have heard speak of this Scarlet Pimpernel. A little flower--red?--yes! They say in Paris that every time a royalist escapes to England, that devil, Fouquier-Tinville, the Public Prosecutor, receives a paper with that little flower designated in red upon it... Yes?

TONY: Yes, that is so.

VICOMTE: Then he will have received one such paper today?

TONY: Undoubtedly.

SUZANNE (*merrily*): Oh! I wonder what he will say! I have heard that the picture of that little red flower is the only thing that frightens him.

FFOULKES: Faith, then, he will have many more opportunities of studying the shape of that small scarlet flower.

COMTESSE (*sighs*): Ah, Monsieur, it all sounds like a romance, and I cannot understand it all.

FFOULKES: Why should you try, Madame?

COMTESSE: But, tell me, what should your leader--why should you all--spend your money and risk your lives--for it is your lives you risk when you set foot in France--and all for us French men and women, who are nothing to you?

TONY (*lightly*): Sport, Madame le Comtesse, sport. We are a nation of sportsmen, you know, and just now it is the fashion to pull the hare from the teeth of the hound.

COMTESSE: Ah, no, no, not sport only, Monsieur... You have a more noble motive, I am sure, for the good work you do.

TONY: Faith, Madame, I would like you to find it then... As for me, I vow, I love the game, for this is the finest sport I have yet encountered.--Hair-breadth escapes... The devil's own risks!--Tallyho!--and away we go.

*COMTESSE shakes her head, still very incredulous.*

SUZANNE (*low and sweet*): Sir Andrew, you at least, I am sure, follow some higher motive. (*timidly*) How many are there in your brave league, Monsieur?

FFOULKES: Twenty all told, Mademoiselle. One to command, and nineteen to obey. All of us Englishmen, and all pledged to the same cause--to obey our leader and to rescue the innocent.

COMTESSE (*fervently*): May God protect you all, Messieurs.

FFOULKES: He has so far, Madame.

COMTESSE: It is wonderful to me, wonderful!--that you should all be so brave, so devoted to your fellow men--yet you are English!--and in France treachery is rife--all in the name of liberty and fraternity.

VICOMTE (*with a melodramatic sigh*): The women even, in France, have been more bitter against us aristocrats than the men.

COMTESSE (*with haughty disdain, and extreme bitterness*): Ah, yes. There was that one woman, Marguerite St. Just, for instance. She denounced the Marquis de St. Cyr and all his family to the awful tribunal of the Terror.

TONY (*quick, apprehensive look at FFOULKES*.): Marguerite St. Just?

FFOULKES: but surely--

COMTESSE: Yes! Surely you know her. She was a leading actress of the Comédie Française, and she married an Englishman lately. You must know her--

TONY: Know her? Know Lady Blakeney--the most fashionable woman in London--the wife of the richest man in England? Of course we all know Lady Blakeney.

SUZANNE: She was a school-fellow of mine at the convent in Paris, and we came over to England together to learn your language. I was very fond of Marguerite, and I cannot believe that she ever did anything so wicked.

FFOULKES: It certainly seems incredible. You say that she actually denounced the Marquis de St. Cyr? Why should she have done such a thing? Surely there must be some mistake--

COMTESSE (*coldly*): No mistake is possible, Monsieur. Marguerite St. Just's brother is a noted republican. There was some talk of a family feud between him and my cousin, the Marquis de St. Cyr. The St. Justs are quite plebeian, and the republican government employs many spies. I assure you there is no mistake... You had not heard this story?

FFOULKES: Faith, Madame, I did hear vague rumors of it, but in England no one would credit it... Sir Percy Blakeney, her husband, is a very wealthy man, of high social position, the intimate friend of the Prince of Wales... And Lady Blakeney leads both fashion and society in London.

COMTESSE: That may be, Monsieur, and we shall, of course, lead a very quiet life in England, but I pray God that while I remain in this beautiful country, I may never meet Marguerite St. Just.

*SUZANNE looks sad. FFOULKES fidgets, very uncomfortable, eyes fixed on his hands. COMTESSE looks stern, rigid, and unbending. TONY looks super uncomfortable, and keeps glancing at JELLYBAND, who looks just as uncomfortable.*

TONY (*whispers to JELLYBAND*): At what time do you expect Sir Percy and Lady Blakeney?

JELLYBAND (*whispers back*): Any moment, my lord. (*Distant horse and carriage noise, getting louder. JELLYBAND shouts*) Sir Percy Blakeney and my lady, they're just arriving. (*outside noise stops. General commotion inside.*)

TONY (*jumps up. Hastily*): Sink me! Something must be done! For goodness' sake, man, try to keep Lady Blakeney talking outside for a moment while the ladies withdraw. Zounds! This is most unfortunate.

JELLYBAND (*runs around anxiously, having lost his head*): Quick Sally! The candles!

COMTESSE (*Rises rigidly. Mechanically*): I will not see her!--I will not see her!

*General clamour off: "Good-day Sir Percy!--Good-day to your ladyship! Your servant Sir Percy" etc. Mixed with feeble tones of "Remember the poor blind man! Of your charity, Lady and Gentleman!"*

MARGUERITE (*off. Her voice should cut all others off, but not be very loud.*): Let the poor man be--and give him some supper at my expense.

*ALL pause for a moment, when she's speaking, then resume. SALLY is in the act of getting candles to lead COMTESSE and SUZANNE upstairs. SUZANNE is very reluctant, and keeps casting glances at off towards MARGUERITE, evidently longing to see her. JELLYBAND bustles anxiously out to greet them, and keep them out until COMTESSE is upstairs.*

MARGUERITE (*off*): Brr! I am as wet as a herring! Dieu! Has anyone ever seen such a contemptible climate?

COMTESSE (*peretory*): Suzanne, come with me at once--I wish it.

SUZANNE (*pleadingly*): Oh! Mama!

JELLYBAND (*off. Feebly*): My lady... Er... h'm!... My lady!...

MARGUERITE (*off. impatiently*): Pardieu, my good man, what are you standing my way for, dancing about like a turkey with a sore foot? Let me get to the fire, I am perished with cold. (*She sails into the room. She looks around, smiles, nods pleasantly to FFOULKES, and gayly and gracefully extends a hand to TONY.*) Hello! My Lord Tony, why--what are you doing

here in Dover? (*she turns to COMTESSE and SUZANNE. She smiles even more, and holds her arms out to SUZANNE.*) Why! If that isn't my little Suzanne over there. Pardieu, little citizeness, how came you to be in England? And Madame too?

*TONY and FFOULKES look apprehensive. MARGUERITE holds her hand out to COMTESSE. COMTESSE stiffens with indignant pride. She puts her hand, firm and restraining, on SUZANNE's shoulder.*

COMTESSE (*stern, extremely haughty and unbending*): Suzanne, I forbid you to speak to that woman.

*SALLY gasps, looking scandalized. TONY and FFOULKES give wordless exclamations of warning and appeal, glancing off towards SIR PERCY. SUZANNE lowers her head, sadly obedient. COMTESSE and MARGUERITE alone are unchanged. After a beat, MARGUERITE raises her eyebrows slightly and gives a small, sarcastic smile.*

MARGUERITE (*gaily, with a small shrug*): Hoity-toity, Citizeness. What fly stings you, pray?

COMTESSE: We are in England now, Madame, and I am at liberty to forbid my daughter to touch your hand in friendship. Come, Suzanne.

*COMTESSE beckons SUZANNE imperiously, gives a deep, old-fashioned curtsy to TONY and FFOULKES, ignoring MARGUERITE, turns, and sails out the door to "upstairs" majestically. MARGUERITE is rigid, but her face is wistful. SUZANNE was about to follow her mother, but she sees MARGUERITE's expression. She runs back to MARGUERITE, throws her arms girlishly around MARGUERITE's neck, and gives her a kiss on the cheek. Then she follows her mother, after a quick, graceful curtsy to all. MARGUERITE daintily blows her a kiss, then turns back to the men with the same sarcastic, humorous smile.*

MARGUERITE (*gaily*): So that's it, is it? La! Sir Andrew, did you ever see such an unpleasant person? I hope when I get old I shan't look like that. (*she gathers up her skirts, and does an excellent imitation of COMTESSE.*) "Suzanne, I forbid you to speak to that woman!" (*She drops her skirts, then laughs, a trifle forced.*)

TONY and FFOULKES (*missing the tone*): Bravo!

TONY: Ah! Lady Blakeney, how they must miss you at the Comédie Française, and how the Parisians must hate Sir Percy for having taken you away.

MARGUERITE (*with a graceful shrug*): Lud, man, 'tis impossible to hate Sir Percy for anything; his witty sallies would disarm even Madame la Comtesse herself.

*VICOMTE steps forward to protest but is interrupted by SIR PERCY making a pleasant, but clearly stupid laugh. He enters in an embarrassed silence, TONY and FFOULKES exchanging sheepish looks. SIR PERCY stands framed in the doorway, extremely richly dressed. ALL freeze, and GOSSIP, signified by one chorus member this time, enters.*

GOSSIP: Sir Percy Blakeney. Unusually tall, unusually rich, and unusually lucky. France was taken by storm when “that demmed idiot” quietly married “the cleverest woman in Europe.” Years before, Sir Percy’s father, Sir Algernon Blakeney, had married a wife years younger than himself and adored her. Their happiness was destroyed abruptly after only a few years of marriage, when she fell prey to madness. Grieving, Sir Algernon took her and their young son abroad. Sir Percy grew up between a distracted father and an insane mother, though he was given a good education. Education had assisted nature’s course, but only apparently in turning him from a budding madman to a budding idiot. Since his family had lead a forcibly retired life, Sir Percy stepped into an extremely large fortune upon his parents’ deaths. He and his wife were welcomed with open arms, and quickly became the acknowledged favorites of the Prince of Wales. Sir Percy was quoted and imitated everywhere. Everyone knew he was very stupid, but no matter, since he *was* a favorite. No one gave him sympathy, moreover, for his marriage, because all agreed his misfortune was of his own making. Moreover, he seemed to want none, showering gifts and pride upon his young and brilliant wife. If she displayed open contempt for him and sharpened her ready wits at his expense, well, he evidently cared not, so why should others?

*GOSSIP leaves, and the scene resumes.*

PERCY (*looks around lazily*): How do, Tony? How do Ffoulkes? (*Shakes them by the hand, covering a slight yawn with the other.*) Zounds, my dear fellow, did you ever see such a beastly day? Demmed climate this. (*MARGUERITE gives a quick, bitter, and sarcastic laugh, looking him up and down. Beat.*) La! How sheepish you all look... What’s up?

MARGUERITE (*with forced gaiety*): On, nothing, Sir Percy, nothing to disturb your equanimity--only an insult to your wife. (*She gives another laugh, which he echoes.*)

PERCY (*placidly*): La, m’dear! You don’t say so. Begad! Who was the bold man who dared to tackle you--eh?

*TONY and VICOMTE step forward at the same time.*

VICOMTE (*with an extremely elaborate bow*): Monsieur, my mother, the Comtesse do Tournay de Basserive, has offended Madame, who I see, is your wife. I cannot ask your pardon for my mother; what she does is right in my eyes. But I am prepared to offer you the usual reparation between men of honor. (*He draws himself up, enthusiastic, proud, and fiery.*)



MARGUERITE (*with a merry, infectious laugh*): Lud, Sir Andrew, look on that pretty picture--the English turkey and the French bantam.

PERCY (*Surveys VICOMTE, wondering and confused. At last*): La! Sir, where in the cuckoo's name, did you learn to speak English?

VICOMTE (*surprised and somewhat abashed*): Monsieur!

PERCY: I protest 'tis marvelous! Demmed marvelous! Don't you think so, Tony--eh? I vow I can't speak the French lingo like that. What?

MARGUERITE: Nay, I'll vouch for that! Sir Percy has a British accent you could cut with a knife.

VICOMTE (*Earnestly*): Monsieur, I fear you have not understand. I offer you the only posseeble reparation among gentlemen.

PERCY (*bland*): What the devil is that?

VICOMTE (*getting angry*): My sword, Monsieur.

MARGUERITE (*merrily*): You are a sportsman, Lord Tony. Ten to one on the little bantam.

PERCY (*looking sleepily at VICOMTE. Good-humored.*): Lud love you, sir. Demmit, young man, what's the good of your sword to me?

VICOMTE (*Sputtering with indignation*): A duel, Monsieur!

PERCY (*turns and looks him up and down. He laughs and buries his hands in his pockets. Leisurely*): A blood-thirsty young ruffian. Do you want to make a hole in a law-abiding man?... As for me, sir, I never fight duels. (*He sits and very comfortably stretches out his legs*) Demmed uncomfortable things, duels, ain't they, Tony? (*VICOMTE's jaw drops and he looks like he's struggling with himself.*)

MARGUERITE (*steps forward*): I pray you, Lord Tony, I pray you play the peacemaker. The child is bursting with rage, and (*sarcastic*) might do Sir Percy an injury. (*mocking laugh at PERCY*) The British turkey has had the day. Sir Percy would provoke all the saints in the calendar and keep his temper the while.

PERCY (*laughs at himself good-naturedly*): Demmed smart that now, wasn't it? (*turns to VICOMTE pleasantly*) Clever woman my wife, sir... You will find *that* out if you live long enough in England.

TONY (*interposing*): Sir Percy is right, Vicomte. (*puts his hand on VICOMTE's shoulder*) it would be hardly fitting that you should commence your career in England, by provoking him to a duel.

VICOMTE (*Hesitates, then shrugs*): Ah, well! If Monsieur is satisfied, I have no griefs. You, milor, are our protector. If I have done wrong, I withdraw myself.

PERCY: Aye, do! Withdraw yourself over there. (*He waves his hand vaguely*) Demmed excitable little puppy. Faith, Ffoulkes, if that's a specimen of the goods you and your friends bring over from France, my advice to you is, drop 'em 'mid Channel, my friend, or I shall have to see old Pitt about it, get him to clap on a prohibitive tariff, and put you in stocks an you smuggle.

MARGUERITE (*coquettishly*): La, Sir Percy, your chivalry misguides you. You forget that you yourself have imported one bundle of goods from France.

PERCY (*rise, deep, elaborate bow to MARGUERITE, with consummate gallantry*): I had the pick of the market, Madame, and my taste is unerring.

MARGUERITE (*Sarcastically*): More than your chivalry, I fear.

PERCY: Odd's life, m'dear! Be reasonable! Do you think I am going to allow my body to be made a pincushion of, by every little frog-eater who don't like the shape of your nose?

MARGUERITE (*bobs a quaint, pretty curtsey*): Lud, Sir Percy! You need not be afraid! Tis not the *men* who dislike the shape of my nose.

PERCY: Afraid be demmed! Do you impugn my bravery, Madame? I don't patronise the ring for nothing, do I, Tony? I've put up the fists with Red Sam before now, and--and he didn't get his own way either--

MARGUERITE (*laughing very merrily*): S'faith, Sir Percy, I would I had seen you then... Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha!--you must have looked a pretty picture... And... and to be afraid of a little French boy... Ha! Ha!... Ha! Ha!

SIR PERCY (*echoes laugh good-naturedly*): la, Madame, you honor me! Zooks! Ffoulkes, mark ye that! I have made my wife laugh!--the cleverest woman in Europe!... Odd's fish, we must have a bowl on that! (*he raps vigorously on the table*) Hey! Jelly! Quick, man! Here, Jelly! (*JELLYBAND comes over*) A bowl of punch, Jelly, hot and strong, eh? The wits that have just made a clever woman laugh must be whetted! Ha! Ha! Ha! Hasten, my good Jelly!

MARGUERITE: Nay, there is no time, Sir Percy. The skipper will be here directly and my brother must get on board, of the *Day Dream* will miss the tide.

PERCY: Time, m'dear? There is plenty of time for any gentleman to get drunk and get on board before the turn of the tide.

JELLYBAND (*respectfully*): I think, your ladyship, that the young gentleman is coming along now with Sir Percy's skipper.

PERCY: That's right, then Armand can join us in the merry bowl. (*turns towards VICOMTE*) Think you, Tony, that the jackanapes of yours will join us in a glass? Tell him that we drink in token of reconciliation.

MARGUERITE: In fact you are all such merry company, that I trust you will forgive me if I bid my brother goodbye in another room.

*ALL nod. PERCY stands, goes to the door, and opens it with consummate, foppish, almost affected gallantry. MARGUERITE sails out, with a contemptuous look at PERCY. PERCY's eyes follow her out, with a veiled look of passionate longing.*

*END SCENE*

*LIGHTS down into*

## Act I, Scene 4

*Sunset. Outside "The Fisherman's Rest." MARGUERITE gazes off into the audience.*

*ARMAND ST. JUST and SKIPPER approach. MARGUERITE turns, sees ARMAND, gives a cry of welcome with a sweet, childlike smile, and holds out her arms.*

MARGUERITE: Armand! (*They embrace lovingly*)

SKIPPER (*respectfully, touches his hat*): We ought to weigh anchor before half an hour, your ladyship.

MARGUERITE (*links her arm through ARMAND's, leading him away from SKIPPER a bit. Wistfully*): Half an hour. Half an hour more, and you'll be far from me, Armand! Oh! I can't believe that you are going, dear! These last few days--whilst Percy--has been away, and I've had you all to myself, have slipped by like a dream.

ARMAND (*gently*): I am not going far, sweet one. A narrow Channel to cross--a few miles of road--I can soon come back.

MARGUERITE: Nay, 'tis not the distance, ARMAND--but that awful Paris... Just now... (*she looks out over the audience again*)

ARMAND (*softly*): Our own beautiful country, Marguerite.

MARGUERITE (*vehemently*): They are going too far, Marmand. You are a republican, so I am... We have the same thoughts, the same enthusiasm for liberty and equality... But even *you* must think they are going too far...

ARMAND (*instinctive, quick, apprehensive glance around*): Hush!

MARGUERITE: Ah! You see; you don't think yourself that it is safe even to speak of these things--here in England! (*She clings to him. Passionately*) Don't go, Armand! Don't go back! What should I do if... If... if... (*she chokes, sobbing. Her appealing eyes meet his steadfast ones.*)

ARMAND (*gently*): You would in any case be my own brave sister, who would remember that, when France is in peril, It is not for her sons to turn their backs on her.

MARGUERITE (*with a return of the sweet, childlike smile, with a quaint little melancholy*): Oh! Armand! I sometimes wish you had not so many lofty virtues... I assure you, little sins are far less dangerous and uncomfortable. (*Earnestly*) But you *will* be prudent?

ARMAND: As far as possible... I promise you.

MARGUERITE: Remember, dear, I have only you... To... to care for me...

ARMAND: Nay, sweet one, you have other interests now. Percy cares for you...

MARGUERITE (*strangely wistful*): He did... Once...

ARMAND: But surely...

MARGUERITE: There, there, dear, don't distress yourself on my account. Percy is very good--

ARMAND (*interrupts energetically*): Nay! I will distress myself on your account, my Margot. Listen, dear, I have not spoken of these things to you before; something always seemed to stop me when I wished to question you. But, somehow, I feel as if I could not go away, and leave you now without asking you one question... (*MARGUERITE turns partially away, apprehensive.*) You need not answer it if you do not wish.

MARGUERITE (*simply*): What is it?

ARMAND: Does Sir Percy know that... I mean, does he know what part you played in the arrest of the Marquis de St. Cyr?

MARGUERITE (*with a mirthless, bitter, jarring laugh*): That I denounced the Marquis de St. Cyr, you mean, to the tribunal that ultimately sent him and his family to the guillotine? Yes, he does know... I told him after I married him...

ARMAND: You told him all the circumstances--which so completely exonerated you from any blame?

MARGUERITE: It was too late to talk of "circumstances"; he heard the story from other sources; my confession came too tardily, it seems. I could no longer plead extenuating circumstances: I could not demean myself by trying to explain--

ARMAND: ...And?

MARGUERITE (*bitterly vehement*): And now I have the satisfaction, Armand, of knowing that the biggest fool in England has the most complete contempt for his wife.

ARMAND (*gently again*): But Sir Percy loved you, Margot.

MARGUERITE: Loved me?--well, Armand, I thought at one time he did, or I should not have married him. (*Faster, hastily*) I daresay... I daresay that even you thought--as everybody else did--that I married Sir Percy because of his wealth--but I assure you, dear, that it was not so. He seemed to worship me with a curious intensity of passion, which went straight to my heart. I had never loved anyone before, as you know, and I was four and twenty then--so I naturally thought that it was not in my nature to love. But it has always seems to me that it *must* be heavenly to be loved blindly, passionately, wholly... worshipped, in fact--and the very fact that Percy was slow and stupid was an attraction to me, as I thought he would love me all the more. A clever man would naturally have other interests, an ambition man other hopes... I thought that a fool would worship, and think of nothing else. And I was ready to respond, Armand; I would have allowed myself to be worshipped and given infinite tenderness in return... (*she sighs, disillusioned. Armand watches her compassionately.*)

*LIGHTS down.*

*END SCENE.*

*END of ACT I.*

## Act II, Scene 1

*The former. Nighttime, bluish light. ARMAND and SKIPPER are gone. MARGUERITE CS, spot on her.*

MARGUERITE: At least Sir Percy has the delicacy to leave me to myself. Proper, decorous, puffed-up fool! And yet I suppose I should be grateful... Grateful! ...As I should be, since his generosity really is boundless. (*She pauses, and begins to look moderately guilty*) I should be nicer to him. And yet... And yet--! (*gaining intensity and volume*) The fop won't be wounded, won't be angered! It really is a trial upon my patience! I almost hope that he will be--is!--wounded! I should hold... That is, hold him in contempt. (*softer*) yet... I almost loved him... Once... could have loved him, if he... (*she shakes her head. firmly*) Loved him! That inane fop! No! His highest thought regards the tying of his cravat or the cut of his coat! (*with a return of softness, a bit sweet now*) However... (*she trails off, gazing into the distance without finishing. After a beat, she turns back to "The Fisherman's Rest." she utters a heavy sigh, and starts to go back in. At first, she goes slow, but then she looks around her, starting to look a bit frightened. She speeds up. CHAUVELIN enters and goes quickly over. She starts to pass him.*)

CHAUVELIN (*murmurs*): Citoyenne St. Just.

MARGUERITE (*with a cry of delight, extends a hand to him*): Chauvelin!

CHAUVELIN (*kisses her fingertips gallantly*): Himself, Citoyenne, at your service.

MARGUERITE *smiles, a delighted, enchanting smile.*

MARGUERITE (*with a pretty little sigh of satisfaction*): Chauvelin... My friend... I am mightily pleased to see you. (*A sarcastic smile begins to hover round CHAUVELIN's lips, which MARGUERITE doesn't notice. Merrily*) But tell me, what in the world, or whom in the world, are you doing here in England?

CHAUVELIN: I might return the subtle compliment, fair lady. What of yourself?

MARGUERITE (*shrug*): Oh, I? Je m'ennuie, mon ami, that is all. (*PERCY's laugh sounds from off, as well as the call, "Hey, Sally! More beer!", the clink of dice, laughter and the tapping of mugs. CHAUVELIN watches MARGUERITE carefully, slyly, without seeming to.*)

CHAUVELIN (*quietly*): You surprised me, Citoyenne. (*He takes a pinch of snuff*)

MARGUERITE (*gaily*): Do I now? Faith, my little Chauvelin, I should have thought that, with your penetration, you would have guessed an atmosphere composed of fogs and virtues would never suit Marguerite St. Just.

CHAUVELIN (*mock conternation*): Dear me! Is it as bad as that?

MARGUERITE: Quite, and worse.

CHAUVELIN: Strange! Now, I thought that a pretty woman would have found English country life particularly attractive.

MARGUERITE (*with a sigh*): yes! So did I. Pretty women ought to have a good time in England, since all the pleasant things are forbidden them--the very things they do every day.

CHAUVELIN: Quite so!

MARGUERITE (*Earnestly*): You'll hardly believe it, my little Chauvelin, but I often pass a whole day--a whole day--without encountering a single temptation.

CHAUVELIN (*gallantly*): Now wonder that the cleverest woman in Europe is troubled with ennui.

MARGUERITE (*Laughs. naively*): it must be pretty bad, mustn't it? Or I should not have been so pleased to see you. And this within a year of a romantic love match... That's just the difficulty...

CHAUVELIN: Ah!... That idyllic folly did not survive the lapse of... Weeks?

MARGUERITE: Idyllic follies never last, my little Chauvelin... They come upon us like the measles... And are as easily cured.

CHAUVELIN (*taking a pinch of snuff*): No wonder the cleverest woman in Europe is troubled with ennui.

MARGUERITE: I was in hopes that you have a prescription against the malady, my little Chauvelin.

CHAUVELIN: how can I succeed in that which Sir Percy Blakeney has failed to accomplish?

MARGUERITE (*dryly*): Shall we leave Sir Percy out of the question for the present, my dear friend?



CHAUVELIN (*quick, keen glance at her*): Ah! My dear lady, pardon me, but that is just what we cannot very well do. I have the most perfect prescription against the worst form of ennui, which I would have been happy to submit to you, but...

MARGUERITE: But what?

CHAUVELIN: There *is* Sir Percy.

MARGUERITE: What has he to do with it?

CHAUVELIN: Quite a good deal, I am afraid. The prescription I offer, fair lady, is called by a very plebeian name: Work!

MARGUERITE: Work?

CHAUVELIN (*Looks long and hard at her, takes a step towards her*): Will you render France a small service, Citoyenne?

MARGUERITE (*Takes an unconscious step backward. Flippantly*): La, man! How serious you would look all of a sudden... Indeed I do not know if I *would* render France a small service--at any rate, it depends upon the kind of service she--or you--want.

CHAUVELIN (*abruptly, breathing hard, strangely intense*): Have you heard of the Scarlet Pimpernel, Citoyenne St. Just?

MARGUERITE (*with a long, merry laugh*): Heard of the Scarlet Pimpernel? Faith, man, we talk of nothing else... We have hats "à la Scarlet Pimpernel"; our horses are called "Scarlet Pimpernel"; at the Prince of Wales' supper party the other night, we had a "souffle à la Scarlet Pimpernel"... Lud! The other day I ordered at my millner's a blue dress trimmed with green, and bless me, if she did not call that "à la Scarlet Pimpernel"!

CHAUVELIN (*still intense and strangely excited*): Then, as you have heard of that enigmatical personage, Citoyenne, you must also have guessed, and know, that the man who hides his identity under that strange pseudonym, is the most bitter enemy of our republic, of France... Of men like Armand St. Just.

MARGUERITE (*quaint little laugh*): La! I dare swear he is... France has many bitter enemies these days.

CHAUVELIN: But you, Citoyenne, are a daughter of France, and should be ready to help her in a moment of deadly peril.

MARGUERITE (*proudly*): My brother devotes his life to France. As for me, I can do nothing... Here in England...

CHAUVELIN: Yes, you... Here, in England, Citoyenne... You alone can help us... Listen! I have been sent over here by the Republican Government as its representative: I present my credentials to Mr. Pitt in London tomorrow. One of my duties here is to find out all about the League of the Scarlet Pimpernel, which has become a standing menace to France, since it is pledged to help our cursed aristocrats--traitors to their country, and enemies of the people--to escape from the just punishment with they deserve. You know as well as I do, Citoyenne, that once they are over here, those French Emigres try to rouse public feeling against the Republic... They are ready to join issue with any enemy bold enough to attack France... Now, within the last month, scores of these emigres, some only suspected of treason, others actually condemned by the tribunal of Public Safety, have succeeded in crossing the Channel. Their escape in each instance was planned, organized, and effected by this society of young English japanapes, headed by a man whose brain seems as resourceful as his identity is mysterious. All the most strenuous efforts on the part of my spies have failed to discover who he is; whilst the others are the hands, he is the head, who beneath this strange anomyny calmly works at the destruction of France. I mean to strike at that head, and for this I want your help--through him afterwards I can reach the rest of the gang: he is a young buck in English Society, of that I feel sure. Find that man for me, Citoyenne! Find him for France.

MARGUERITE (*with assumed flippancy*): La! Man, you are astonishing. Where in the world am I to look for him?

CHAUVELIN (*insinuatingly*): You go everywhere, Citoyenne. Lady Blakeney is the pivot of social London, so I am told... You see everything, you *hear* everything.

MARGUERITE (*Draws herself up, and looks at him with contempt*): Easy, my friend. Easy! You seem to forget that there are six feet of Sir Percy Blakeney and a long line of ancestors to stand between Laby Blakeney and such a thing as you propose.

CHAUVELIN (*Even more intense, and earnestly*): For the sake of France, Citoyenne!

MARGUERITE: tush man, you talk nonsense anyway: for even if you did know who this Scarlet Pimpernel is, you could do nothing to him--an Englishman!

CHAUVELIN (*With a dry, rasping laugh*): I'd take my chance of that. At any rate we can send him to the guillotine first to cool his ardour, then when there is a diplomatic fuss about it, we can apologise--humbly--to the British Government, and if necessary, pay compensation to the bereaved family.

MARGUERITE (*Draws further away, her voice vibrated with indignant passion*): What you propose is horrible, Chauvelin. Whoever that man may be, he is brave and noble, and never--do you hear me?--never would I lend a hand to such villany.

CHAUVELIN (*slyly*): you prefer to be insulted by every French aristocrat who comes to this country?

MARGUERITE (*bites her lip, with assumed indifferent*): That is beside the question. I can defend myself, but I refuse to do any dirty work for you--or for you. You have other means at your disposal; You must use them, my friend. (*She turns to go.*)

CHAUVELIN: That is not your last word, Citoyenne. We meet in London, I hope!

MARGUERITE (*Speaking over shoulder*): We meet in London, but that is my last word. (*leaves*)

*CHAUVELIN doesn't look disappointed. He takes another pinch of snuff. He smiles, half sarcastic, half sly, wholly satisfied. He freezes, a snapshot.*

*LIGHTS come slowly down. A spotlight centered on CHAUVELIN stays on for 10 seconds after all the other lights are off.*

*END SCENE*

## Act II, Scene 2

*Interior of "The Fisherman's Rest." TONY and FFOULKES stand center stage with spotlights on them. JELLYBAND is busily clearing things away: mugs, dishes, etc.*

TONY: I say, Jelly, has everyone gone?

JELLYBAND: Everyone, as you see, my lord.

TONY: Then we can talk here undisturbed for a half an hour?

JELLYBAND: At your service, my lord... I'll leave candles on the dresser... And your rooms are quite ready... I sleep at the top of the house myself, but if your lordship'll only call loudly enough, I daresay I shall hear.

TONY: All right, Jelly... And... I say, put the lamp out--the fire'll give us all the light we need--and we don't want to attract the passer-by.

JELLYBAND: All ri', my lord. (*he blows out the candles and turns off the lamp.*)

FFOULKES: Let's have a bottle of wine, Jelly.

JELLYBAND: All ri', sir! (*He fetches a wine bottle and two glasses and places them on the table.*) is that all, gentlemen?

TONY: That'll do nicely, thanks, Jelly!

JELLYBAND: Good-night, my lord! Good-night, sir!

FFOULKES: Good-night, Jelly! (*He gazes into the fire, beginning to daydream.*)

TONY: All right again this time, Ffoulkes?

FFOULKES (*beat. Starts, looks at TONY, then, musingly*): Yes! All right!

TONY: No hitch?

FFOULKES: None.

TONY (*with a pleasant laugh, as he pours out a glass of wine*): I need not ask, I suppose, whether you found the journey pleasant this time?

FFOULKES (*Gaily*): No, friend, you need not ask. It was all right.

TONY: Then here's to her very good health. She's a bonnie lass, though she *is* a French one. And here's to your courtship--may it flourish and prosper exceedingly. (*He tosses back his drink.*)

FFOULKES: Well! You'll be doing the journey next, Tony, I expect. You and Hastings, certainly, and I hope you may have as pleasant a task as I had, and as charming a travelling companion. You have no idea, Tony...

TONY (*interrupts*): No! I haven't, but I'll take your word for it. And now, how about business. (*They draw closer together and lower their voices.*)

FFOULKES: I saw the Scarlet Pimpernel alone, for a few moments in Calais, a day or two ago. He crossed over to England two days before we did. He had escorted the party all the way from Paris, dressed--you'll never credit it!--as an old woman, and driving--until they were safely out of the city--the covered cart, under which the Comtesse de Tournay, Mademoiselle Suzanne, and the Vicomte lay concealed among the turnips and cabbages. They, themselves, of course, never suspected who their driver was. He drove them right through a line of soldiery and a yelling mob, who were screaming, "á bas les aristos!" But the market cart got through along with some others, and the Scarlet Pimpernel, in shawl, petticoat, and hood, yelled "á bas les aristos!" louder than anybody. (*He starts to get carried away by enthusiasm. louder*) Faith! His cheek is preposterous, I vow!--and that's carried him through.

TONY: Odd's fish! It's so demmed marvelous!

FFOULKES (*more quietly*): He wants you and Hastings to meet him in Calais on the second of the month. Let me see! That will be next Wednesday.

TONY: Yes.

FFOULKES: It is, of course, the case of the Comte de Tournay, this time; a dangerous task, for the Comte, whose escape from his chateau, after he had been declared a "suspect" by the Committee of Public Safety, was a masterpiece of the Scarlet Pimpernel's ingenuity, is now under sentence of death. It will be rare sport to get *him* out of France, and you will have a narrow escape, if you get through at all. St. Just has actually gone to meet him--of course, no one suspects St. Just as yet; but after that... To get them both out of the country! I'faith, 'twill be a tough job, and tax even the ingenuity of our chief. I hope I may yet have orders to be of the party.

TONY: Have you any special instructions for me?

FFOULKES: Yes! Rather more precise ones than usual. It appears that the Republican Government have sent an accredited agent over to England, a man named Chauvelin, who is said to be terribly bitter against our League, and determined to discover the identity of our leader, so that he may have him kidnapped, the next time he sets foot in France. This Chauvelin has brought a whole army of spies with him, and until the chief has sampled the lot he thinks we should meet as seldom as possible on the business of the League, and on no account should talk to each other in public places for a time. When he wants to speak to us, he will contrive to let us know. (*FFOULKES pulls out a paper from his jacket, which he and TONY study closely. FRENCH SPY slowly army-crawls towards them silently. He should be just barely visible.*) You are to read these instructions and commit them to memory, then destroy them. (*He goes to put it away, and another piece of paper falls to the ground. He picks it up, confused.*)

TONY: What's that?

FFOULKES: I don't know.

TONY: It dropped out of that other paper just now. It certainly does not seem to be with the other paper. Strange!--I wonder when it got there? (*He glances at it*) It is from the chief. (*They lean in, trying to decipher it. Creak from off in the direction of the front door.*)

TONY and FOULKES (*instinctively*): What's that?

*LIGHTS down, sounds of a scuffle. SPOTLIGHT comes up on Center Stage with TONY and FFOULKES gagged and bound, though struggling. FRENCH SPY is directly behind them. CHAUVELIN enters, leisurely and bestows an ironic smile on them.*

CHAUVELIN: Good! Now search their pockets and give me all the papers you find. (*FRENCH SPY quickly does, there were just the papers in FFOULKES' breast pocket. CHAUVELIN nods with satisfaction. Quietly*) Good. Now put them outside... (*His smile widens*) Methinks their tempers need somewhat of... Cooling. (*FRENCH SPY nods, then he, TONY, and FFOULKES Freeze. SPOTLIGHT shifts to CHAUVELIN. He looks through the papers.*) Not a bad day's work on the whole. Not a bad day's work. (*He suddenly smiles, a predatory, frenal, wolfish grin*) Armand St. Just a traitor after all. (*He clenches his fist, crushing the papers. Viciously*) Now... fair... Marguerite Blakeney. I think you will help me to find the Scarlet Pimpernel.

*LIGHTS down.*

*END SCENE*

*END of ACT II*

*INTERMISSION*

## Act III, Scene 1

*Interior of the Covent Garden Theatre. Sounds of an orchestra performing Mozart, off. CHORUS enters, dressed as various nobility. PRINCE OF WALES enters, ALL bow to him, he bows back and sits down. LORD GRENVILLE enters with CHAUVELIN. LADY PORTARLES and COMTESSE enter and sit down, COMTESSE dressed in very fashionable mourning blacks. CHAUVELIN sits down. LORD GRENVILLE talks to him briefly, he nods, and LORD GRENVILLE comes over LADY PORTARLES and COMTESSE.*

LORD GRENVILLE: Madame, did you not tell me yesterday that the League of the Scarlet Pimpernel had pledged their honor to bring Monsieur le Comte safely across the Channel?

COMTESSE: Ah, yes! And that is my only hope. I saw Lord Hastings yesterday... He reassured me again.

LORD GRENVILLE: Then I am sure you need have no fear. What the League have sworn, that they surely will accomplish. Ah! If I were but a few years younger... *(He trails off with a wistful sigh)*

LADY PORTARLES: La, man! You are still young enough to turn your back on that French scarecrow that sits enthroned in your box tonight.

LORD GRENVILLE: I wish I could... But your ladyship must remember that in serving our country we must put prejudices aside. Monsieur Chauvelin is the accredited agent of his government...

LADY PORTARLES: Odd's fish, man! You don't call those bloodthirsty ruffians over there a government, do you?

LORD GRENVILLE *(guardedly)*: It has not been thought advisable as yet to break off diplomatic relations with France, and we cannot therefore refuse to receive with courtesy the agent she wishes to send to us.

LADY PORTARLES: Diplomatic relations be demmed, my lord! That sly little fox over there is nothing but a spy, I'll warrant, and you'll find--an I'm much mistaken, that he'll concern himself little with such diplomacy, beyond trying to do mischief to royalist refugees--to our heroic Scarlet Pimpernel and to the members of that brave little league.

COMTESSE *(with pursed lips)*: I am sure, that if this Chauvelin wishes to do us mischief he will find a faithful ally in Lady Blakeney.



LADY PORTARLES: Bless the woman! Did anyone ever see such perversity? My Lord Grenville, you have the gift of gab, will you please explain to Madame la Comtesse that she is acting like a fool. In your position here in England, Madame, you cannot afford to put on the hoity-toity airs you French aristocrats are so fond of. Lady Blakeney may or may not be in sympathy with those ruffians in France; She may or may not have hand anything to do with the arrest and condemnation of St. Cyr, or whatever the man's name is, but she is the leader of fashion in this country; Sir Percy Blakeney has more money than any half-dozen other men put together, he is hand and glove with royalty, and your trying to snub Lady Blakeney will not harm her, but will make you look a fool. Isn't that so, my Lord?

*LORD GRENVILLE opens his mouth to respond, when the rest of the CHORUS goes "shh!" He shuts his mouth again, looking sheepish, and returns to his seat. MARGUERITE enters on the arm of PERCY. He sits her down with a bow, as usual full of effeminate gallantry. She bestows a good-naturedly contemptuous look on him, looks around quickly, taking the crowd, meets eyes with CHAUVELIN, withdraws her eyes, and then turns her attention to the music. She is soon lost in it, the artist in her thrilling to the music. PERCY stands there for a moment, closes his eyes with a look of intense pain on his face for just a moment, and then goes to sit and chat with PRINCE OF WALES. CHAUVELIN watches her, with a smile of mixed sarcasm and pleasure playing on his face. Various people nod to her, which she returns graciously, if somewhat impatiently. After a little while, CHAUVELIN gets up, goes over, bows, and kisses her hand with perfect urbanity. MARGUERITE starts, surprised.*

CHAUVELIN: A word to you, Citoyenne.

MARGUERITE: Lud, man! You frightened me. Your presence is most importunate. I want to listen to Mozart, and have no mind for talking.

CHAUVELIN (*sitting down and drawing his chair near hers without permission, earning disgusted and contemptuous looks from some of CHORUS*): But this is my only opportunity (*beat. She doesn't respond*) This is my only opportunity. Lady Blakeney is always so surrounded, so feted by her court, that a mere old friend has but very little chance.

MARGUERITE (*impatiently*): Faith, man! You must seek for another opportunity then. I am going to Lord Grenville's ball tonight after the concert. So are you, probably. I'll give you five minutes then...

CHAUVELIN (*placid, yet somehow much more threatening*): Three minutes now are quite sufficient for me. And I think that you would be wise to listen to me, Citoyenne St. Just.

MARGUERITE (*shivers. beat*): Is that a threat, Citoyen?

CHAUVELIN (*gallantly*): Nay, fair lady, only an arrow shot in the air. (*beat. Quietly with a sudden return of former manner*) your brother, St. Just, is in peril.

MARGUERITE (*stiffens, then forces herself to relax. With affected merriment*): Lud, then, since 'tis one of your imaginary plots, you'd best go back to your own seat and leave me to enjoy the music. (*she taps her fingers nervously for a moment. Suddenly and irrelevantly*) Well?

CHAUVELIN: Well, Citoyenne?

MARGUERITE: About my brother?

CHAUVELIN: I have news of him for you which, I think, will interest you, but first let me explain... May I? (*beat. MARGUERITE is striving not to seem interested.*) The other day, Citoyenne, I asked for your help... France needed it, and I thought I could rely on you, but you gave me your answer... Since then the exigencies of my own affairs and your own social duties have kept us apart... Although many things have happened...

MARGUERITE (*lightly*): To the point, I pray you, citoyen. The music is entrancing and the audience will get impatient of your talk. (*She listens to him, apparently evincing the reaction she anticipates from others.*)

CHAUVELIN: One moment, Citoyenne. The day on which I had the honor of meeting you at Dover, and less than an hour after I had you... Final... Answer, I obtained possession of some papers, which revealed another one of those subtle schemes for the escape of a batch of French aristocrats--that traitor de Tournay amongst others--all organized by that arch-meddler, the Scarlet Pimpernel. Some of the threads, too, of this mysterious organization have come into my hands, but not all, and I want you--nay! You *must* help me gather them together.

MARGUERITE (*gaily, with a shrug*): Bah! Man. Have I not already told you that I care nothing about your schemes or about the Scarlet Pimpernel and had you not spoken about my brother...

CHAUVELIN (*imperturbably*): A little patience, I entreat, Citoyenne. Two gentlemen, Lord Antony Dewhurst and Sir Andrew Ffoulkes were at "The Fisherman's Rest" at Dover that same night.

MARGUERITE: I know. I saw them there.

CHAUVELIN: They are already known to my spies as members of that accursed league. It was Sir Andrew Ffoulkes who escorted the Comtesse de Tournay and her children across the Channel. When the two young men were alone, my spy forced (his/her) way into the coffee room of the inn, gagged and pinioned the two gallants, seized their papers, and

brought them to me. (*MARGUERITE stiffens, her fingers drumming furiously on the arm of her chair*)

MARGUERITE (*with clearly assumed gaiety*): Faith! And your impudence passes belief. Robbery and violence!--in England!--in a crowded inn! Your men might have been caught in the act!

CHAUVELIN: What if they had? They are children of France and have been trained by your humble servant. Had they been caught, they would have gone to jail, or even the gallows, without a word of protest or indiscretion; at any rate, it was well worth the risk. A crowded inn is safer for these little operations than you would think, and my men have experience.

MARGUERITE (*casually and carelessly*): Well? And... those papers?

CHAUVELIN: Unfortunately, though they have given me cognizance of certain names... Certain movements... Enough, I think, to thwart their projected coup for the moment, it would only be for the moment, and still leaves me ignorant of the identity of the Scarlet Pimpernel.

MARGUERITE (*same as before*): La! My friend, then you are where you were before, aren't you? And you can leave me to enjoy the last movement. Faith! (*she pretends to smother a yawn behind one hand*) Had you not spoken about my brother...

CHAUVELIN (*quietly and patiently*): I am coming to him just now, Citoyenne. Among the papers there was a letter to Sir Andrew Ffoulkes, written by your brother, St. Just.

MARGUERITE (*tenses*): Well? And?

CHAUVELIN: That letter shows him not only to be in sympathy with the enemy of France, but actually a helper, if not a member, of the League of the Scarlet Pimpernel. (*beat*)

MARGUERITE (*with louder, gaier laughter, despair lurking in her eyes. She looks him full in the face.*): La, man! Did I not say it was some imaginary plot?... Armand in league with the enigmatic Scarlet Pimpernel!... Armand busy helping those French aristocrats whom he despises!... Faith, the tale does infinite credit to your imagination!

CHAUVELIN (*same unruffled calm*): Let me make my point clear, Citoyenne. I must assure you that St. Just is compromised beyond the slightest hope of pardon.

*MARGUERITE is frozen, fear and despair battling in her eyes, thinking. She rises and goes downstage. CHAUVELIN follows.*

MARGUERITE (*at last, quietly, no more bravado*): Chauvelin... Chauvelin, my friend, shall we try to understand one another. It seems my wits have become rusty by contact with this damp climate. Now, tell me, you are very anxious to discover the identity of the Scarlet Pimpernel, isn't that so?

CHAUVELIN: France's most bitter enemy, Citoyenne... All the more dangerous, as he works in the dark.

MARGUERITE: All the more noble, you mean... Well!--and you would now force me to do some spying work for you in exchange for my brother Armand's safety?--is that it?

CHAUVELIN (*protesting urbanely*): Fie! Two very ugly words, fair lady. There can be no question of *force*, and the service which I ask of you, in the name of France, could never be called by the shocking name of spying.

MARGUERITE (*very dryly*): At any rate, that is what it is called over here. That is your intention, is it not?

CHAUVELIN: My intention is that you yourself win the free pardon for Armand St. Just by doing me a small service.

MARGUERITE: What is that?

CHAUVELIN (*eagerly*): Only watch for me tonight, Citoyenne St. Just. Listen: among the papers where were found about the person of Sir Andrew Ffoulkes there was a tiny note. See! (*he takes the small note from the previous scene from his breast pocket and hands it to her.*)

MARGUERITE (*takes it. Reads*): Remember we must not meet more often than is strictly necessary. You have the instructions for the second. If you wish to speak to me again, I shall be at G's ball. (*she looks at CHAUVELIN*) What does it mean?

CHAUVELIN: Look again, Citoyenne, and you will understand.

MARGUERITE: There is a device here in the corner, a small red flower...

CHAUVELIN: Yes.

MARGUERITE (*eagerly*): The Scarlet Pimpernel and G's ball means Grenville's ball... He will be at my lord Grenville's ball tonight.

CHAUVELIN (*blandly*): That is how I interpreted the note, Citoyenne. Lord Antony Dewhurst and Sir Andrew Ffoulkes, after they were pinioned and searched by my spy, were

carried by my orders to a lonely house in the Dover road, which I rented for the purpose: there they remained close prisoners until this morning. But having found this tiny scrap of paper, my intention was that they should be in London, in time to attend my Lord Grenville's ball. You see, do you not? That they must have a great deal to say to their chief... And thus they will have an opportunity of speaking to him tonight, just as he directed them to do. Therefore, this morning, those two young gallants found every bar and bolt open in that lonely house in the Dover road, their jailers disappeared, and two good horses standing ready saddled and tethered in the yard. I have not seen them yet, but I think we may safely conclude that they did not draw reign until they reached London. Now you see how simple it all is, Citoyenne!

MARGUERITE (*with bitter flippancy*): It does seem simple, doesn't it? When you want to kill a chicken... You take hold of it... Then you wring its neck... It's only the chicken who does not find it quite so simple. Now you hold a knife to my throat, and a hostage for my obedience... You find it simple... I don't.

CHAUVELIN: Nay, Citoyenne, I offer you a chance at saving the brother you love from the consequences of his own folly.

MARGUERITE (*face softens. murmurs*): The only being in the world who has loved me truly and constantly... (*despairing, child-like appeal, choking back sobs.*) But what do you want me to do, Chauvelin? In my present position, it is well-nigh impossible!

CHAUVELIN (*dryly*): Nah, Citoyenne, as Lady Blakeney, no one suspects you, and with your help to-night I may--who knows?--succeed in finally establishing the identity of the Scarlet Pimpernel... You are going to the ball anon... Watch for me there, Citoyenne, watch and listen... . You can tell me if you hear a chance word or whisper... You can note everyone to whom Sir Andrew Ffoulkes or Lord Antony Dewhurst will speak. You are absolutely beyond suspicion now. Find out who he is, and I will pledge the word of France that your brother will be safe.

MARGUERITE (*long beat while she thinks it over, then pleasantly*): If I promise to help you in this matter, Chauvelin, will you give me that letter of St. Just's?

CHAUVELIN (*with a sarcastic smile*): If you render me useful service tonight, Citoyenne, I will give you that letter... Tomorrow.

MARGUERITE: You do not trust me?

CHAUVELIN: I trust you absolutely, dear lady, but St. Just's life is forfeit to his country... It rests with you to redeem it.

MARGUERITE (*pleading*): I may be powerless to help you, were I ever so willing.

CHAUVELIN (*quietly*): That would be a terrible thing indeed for you... And for St. Just.  
(*MARGUERITE shudders.*)

*A very long pause. CHAUVELIN looks satisfied. MARGUERITE looks frightened and despairing, grasping desperately for a gleam of hope. SIR PERCY enters from behind them both, looks uncertain, makes a snap decision, and goes to stand directly behind CHAUVELIN.*

SIR PERCY (*drawls*): Er... your chair is outside... M'dear.

*CHAUVELIN jumps and the inane smiles spreads across SIR PERCY's face. MARGUERITE looks at him, half despairing, half hopeful, which he seems not to observe. MARGUERITE looks away. As soon as she does, audience should see him tense slightly, and his eyes should have a hint of strong anger when they look at CHAUVELIN.*

SIR PERCY (*continues imperterably*): I suppose you will want to go to that demmed ball... Excuse me--er--Monsieur Chauvelin--I had not observed you... (*he extends two extremely limp fingers, which CHAUVELIN shakes.*) Are you coming, m'dear?

VARIOUS CHORUS: Hush! Shh! Silence! (etc.)

SIR PERCY (*good-natured smile*): Demmed impudence.

MARGUERITE (*looks back at SIR PERCY, all traces of her ordeal gone, and sighs impatiently. She takes SIR PERCY's arm.*): I am ready to go. (*CHAUVELIN prepares to follow. She looks back and meets his eyes. Pleasantly*) It is only au revoir, Chauvelin. We shall meet again at my Lord Grenville's ball, anon.

*LIGHTS DOWN slowly. A spotlight on CHAUVELIN which turns off last of all, only after the following: CHAUVELIN, with a sarcastic smile, takes a pinch of snuff, then dusts off his jacket looking like a smug cat.*

END SCENE

## Act III, Scene 2

*LORD GRENVILLE'S ball. As GUESTS enter, they are given a bow by LORD GRENVILLE and CHAUVELIN which they return according to gender. Their responses to GRENVILLE are pleasant, and to CHAUVELIN, they are lofty and coldly polite, which he meets with an ironic and amused smile. PRINCE OF WALES enters, with MARGUERITE on his arm, and PERCY following.*

FOOTMAN (*booms pompously*): His Royal Highness, the Prince of Wales and suit, Sir Percy Blakeney, Lady Blakeney. (*GRENVILLE advances to meet them: honored, etc.*)

GRENVILLE: Will your Highness permit me to introduce Monsieur Chauvelin, the accredited agent of the French Government? (*CHAUVELIN steps forward and bows very low. PRINCE gives a very curt nod in return.*)

PRINCE (*coldly*): Monsieur, we will try to forget the government that sent you, and look upon you merely as our guest--a private gentleman from France. As such you are welcome, Monsieur.

CHAUVELIN: Monseigneur. (*bows to PRINCE again.*) Madame. (*elaborate, ceremonious bow to MARGUERITE.*)

MARGUERITE (*gaily*): Ah! My little Chauvelin! (*extends a gracious, glittering hand to CHAUVELIN.*) Monsieur and I are old friends, your Royal Highness.

PRINCE (*much more gracious*): Ah, then, you are doubly welcome, Monsieur.

GRENVILLE: There is someone else I would crave permission to present to your Royal Highness.

PRINCE: Ah! Who is it?

GRENVILLE: Madame la Comtesse de Tournay de Basserive and her family, who have but recently came from France.

PRINCE: By all means!--They are among the fortunate ones then!

*GRENVILLE goes to find COMTESSE. She is as far on the other side of the stage from CHAUVELIN as possible.*

PRINCE (*sees her, whispers to MARGUERITE*): Lud love me! (*beat*) Lud love me! She looks very virtuous and very melancholy!

MARGUERITE (*with a smile*): Faith, your Royal Highness, virtue is like precious odors, most fragrant when crushed.

PRINCE (*sighs*): Virtue, alas! Is most unbecoming in your sex, Madame. (*GRENVILLE and COMTESSE with SUZANNE approach.*)

GRENVILLE: Madame la Comtesse de Tournay de Basserive.

PRINCE: This is a pleasure, Madame; My Royal father, as you know, is ever glad to welcome those of your compatriots whom France has driven from her shores.

COMTESSE (*becomingly dignified*): Your Royal Highness is ever gracious. (*gestures to SUZANNE*) My daughter, Suzanne, Monseigneur.

PRINCE: Ah! Charming!--Charming! And now allow me, Comtesse, to introduce you, Lady Blakeney, who honors us with her friendship. You and she will have much to say to one another, I vow. Every compatriot of Lady Blakeney's is doubly welcome for her sake... Her friends are our friends... her enemies, the enemies of England. (*MARGUERITE suppresses laughter*)

*COMTESSE and MARGUERITE curtsy elaborately to each other.*

MARGUERITE (*demure*): His Royal Highness is ever gracious, Madame, but there is no need for his kind of mediation... Your amiable reception of me at our last meeting still dwells pleasantly in my memory.

COMTESSE (*frigid*): We poor exiles, Madame, show our gratitude to England by devotion to the wishes of Monseigneur.

MARGUERITE: Madame!

COMTESSE: Madame. (*They exchange another ceremonious curtsey.*)

PRINCE (*To Vicomte*): I am happy to know you, Monsieur le Vicomte. I knew your father well when he was ambassador in London.

VICOMTE: Ah, Monseigneur! I was a leetle boy then... and now I owe the honor of this meeting to our protector, the Scarlet Pimpernel.



PRINCE (*quickly and earnestly*): Hush! (*He nods his head in the direction of CHAUVELIN. CHAUVELIN has been watching COMTESSE and MARGUERITE's meeting with sarcastic pleasure.*)

CHAUVELIN: Nay, Monseigneur, pray do not check this gentleman's display of gratitude; the name of that interesting flower is well known to me—and to France.

PRINCE (*glances keenly at CHAUVELIN*): Faith, then, Monsieur, perhaps you know more about our National hero than we do ourselves... perchance you know who he is... see! The ladies hang upon your lips... you would render yourself popular among the fair sex if you were to gratify their curiosity.

CHAUVELIN (*with significance*): Ah, Monseigneur, rumor has it that your highness could—an you would—give the truest account of that enigmatical wayside flower. (*He shoots a quick glance at MARGUERITE, who shows no emotion.*)

PRINCE: Nay, man. My lips are sealed! And the members of the league jealously guard the secret of their chief... so his fair adorers have to be content with worshipping a shadow. (*with charm and dignity*) Here in England, Monsieur, we but name the Scarlet Pimpernel, and every fair cheek is suffused with a blush of enthusiasm. None have seen him save his faithful lieutenants. We know not if he be tall or short, fair or dark, handsome or ill-formed; but we know that he is the bravest gentleman in all the world, and we all feel a little proud, Monsieur, when we remember he is an Englishman.

MARGUERITE: Ah, my Chauvelin, His Royal Highness should add that we ladies think of him as a hero of old... we worship him... we wear his badge... we tremble for him when he is in danger, and exult with him in his hour of victory. (*CHAUVELIN bows placidly to both with an enigmatic smile.*)

SIR PERCY (*with his inane laugh*): and we poor husbands, we have to stand by... while they worship a demmed shadow. (*ALL laugh, PRINCE louder than the rest. ALL disperse and diffuse into a crowd.*)

END SCENE

### Act III, Scene 3

*Suggestions of a party. Flashes of colored light on the following: whirling couples in gay costume, MARGUERITE with a fixed smile on her face, a look of terror in her eyes, avoiding both SIR PERCY and CHAUVELIN as much as possible. CHAUVELIN tries to follow her, and he should be allowed to get near, but when he gets close enough to almost catch her, then a couple should whirl in front of him just long enough for MARGUERITE to escape. There is faint music. Over all of this, SIR PERCY, who has not tried to go to MARGUERITE, is standing in the FL corner, hands in pockets, chanting over the top. All of the above should stop the moment he's done chanting.*

SIR PERCY: We seek him here, we seek him there,  
Those Frenchies seek him everywhere.  
Is he in heaven? (*beat, then much more significant*)  
Is he in hell?  
That demmed, elusive Pimpernel.

*Lights go back to normal. SIR PERCY goes to play cards in the BR corner. MARGUERITE is surrounded by men, chatting and laughing with false gaiety. CHAUVELIN is observing the scene, aloof but alert. FFOULKES and TONY enter. FFOULKES immediately makes a beeline for SUZANNE. COMTESSE watches disapprovingly. TONY enters the dancing, chatting crowd. Beat. SUZANNE gets pulled away from FFOULKES by COMTESSE. FFOULKES goes towards FL corner. LORD HASTINGS pushes past him and slips him a note deftly. MARGUERITE casually follows FFOULKES. He sees her, and she pretends to be faint.*

MARGUERITE (*murmurs*): The heat in the crowd was terrible... I felt so faint... Ah!... (*She makes as if to fall. FFOULKES catches her one-handed, note still in the other hand.*)

FFOULKES (*concerned*): You are ill, Lady Blakeney? Let me...

MARGUERITE (*interrupts quickly*): No, no, nothing—a chair—quick. (*FFOULKES pulls one out for her. She sinks into it, throws back her head, and closes her eyes.*) There! The giddiness is passing off... do not heed me, Sir Andrew; I assure you I already feel better. (*FFOULKES turns his back, and goes to burn the note. MARGUERITE's eyes snap open and she grabs it, blows out the flame, and casually holds it to her nose.*) How thoughtful of you, Sir Andrew. Surely 'twas your grandmother who taught you that the smell of burnt paper was a sovereign remedy against giddiness. (*She gives a sigh of satisfaction. FFOULKES looks stricken. She bursts into laughter upon catching sight of his face. Playfully*) Why do you stare at me like that? I assure you I feel much better; your remedy has proved most effectual. This corner is most delightfully cool and the sound of the gavotte from the ballroom is fascinating and soothing. Why? Still dreaming and staring? You are most ungallant, Sir Andrew; and now I come to think about it, you seemed more startled than

pleased when I saw you just now. I do believe, after all, that it was not concern for my health, nor yet a remedy taught you by your grandmother that caused you to burn this tiny scrap of paper... I vow it must have been your lady love's last cruel epistle you were trying to destroy. Now confess! (*She playfully holds up the scrap of paper.*) Does this contain a final congé or a last appeal to kiss and make friends?

FFOULKES (*self-possession gradually returning*): Whichever it is, Lady Blakeney, this little note is undoubtedly mine, and... (*He tries to grab it. She steps back, and, as if an accident, knocks the candles over.*)

MARGUERITE (*Cry of alarm*): The candles, Sir Andrew—quick! (*While he hastily attends to them, she reads the note. When he looks at her, she has dropped the note, apparently only concerned about the accident. He gives a sigh of relief and picks it up.*) For shame, Sir Andrew, making havoc in the heart of some impressionable duchess, whilst conquering the affections of my sweet little Suzanne. Well, well! I do believe it was Cupid himself who stood by you, and threatened the entire Foreign Office with destruction by fire, just on purpose to make me drop love's message, before it had been polluted by my indiscrete eyes. To think that, a moment longer, and I might have known the secrets of an erring duchess.

FFOULKES (*Just as calm*): You will forgive me, Lady Blakeney, if I resume the interesting occupation which you have interrupted?

MARGUERITE: By all means, Sir Andrew! How should I venture to thwart the love god again? Perhaps he would mete out some terrible chastisement against my presumption. Burn your love token, by all means! (*FFOULKES burn it, not noticing the look of triumph on MARGUERITE's face, which is gone by the time he looks back at her. She smiles charmingly at him.*) And now, Sir Andrew, will you venture to excite the jealousy of your fair lady by asking me to dance the minuet? (*They go back to the crowd, and dance, talking the while.*) I have promised to go down to supper with His Royal Highness, but tell me... am I forgiven? (*Long pause.*)

FFOULKES: Forgiven?

MARGUERITE: Yes! Confess, I gave you a fright just now... but remember, I am not an English woman, and I do not look upon the exchanging of billet doux as a crime, and I vow I'll not tell my little Suzanne. But now, tell me, shall I welcome you to my water party on Wednesday?

FFOULKES (*evasively*): I am not sure, Lady Blakeney. I may have to leave London tomorrow.

MARGUERITE (*earnestly*): I would not do that, if I were you. (*He suddenly looks suspicious. Upon noticing, she adds gaily*) No one can throw a ball better than you can, Sir Andrew, we

should so miss you on the bowling green. (*FFOULKES smiles and leads her across the room to where PRINCE is waiting. MARGUERITE takes PRINCE's arm.*)

PRINCE: Madame, supper awaits us and I am full of hope. The goddess of Fortune has frowned so persistently on me at hazard, that I look with confidence to the smiles of the goddess of Beauty.

MARGUERITE: Your highness has been unfortunate at the card tables?

PRINCE: Aye! Most unfortunate. Blakeney, not content with being the richest of my father's subjects, has also the most outrageous luck. By the way, where is that inimitable wit? I vow, Madame, that this life would be but a dreary desert without your smile and his sallies.

*Lights down.*

*END SCENE*

## Act III, Scene 4

*FL corner. MARGUERITE is sitting. CHAUVELIN enters and goes to her.*

CHAUVELIN: You have news for me?

MARGUERITE (*mechanically*): Nothing of importance, but it might prove a clue. I contrived—no matter how—to detect Sir Andrew Ffoulkes in the very act of burning a paper at one of these candles, in this very corner. The paper I succeeded in holding between my fingers for the space of 2 minutes, and to cast my eyes on it for that of 10 seconds.

CHAUVELIN (*quietly*): Time enough to learn its contents?

MARGUERITE (*with a nod, same mechanical manner*): In the corner of the paper there was the usual rough device of a small star-shaped flower. Above it I read 2 lines, everything else was scorched and blackened by the flame.

CHAUVELIN: And what were the 2 lines? (*She looks as though turned to stone. He continues with dry sarcasm*) It is lucky the whole paper was not burned, for it might have fared ill with Armand St. Just. What were the 2 lines, Citoyenne?

MARGUERITE (*quietly*): 1 was, “I start myself tomorrow,” the other—“If you wish to speak to me, I shall be in the supper room at 1 o’clock precisely.” (*CHAUVELIN looks at a pocket watch from his breast pocket.*)

CHAUVELIN (*placidly*): Then I have plenty of time.

MARGUERITE: What are you going to do? (*Beat. She mechanically repeats the same question.*)

CHAUVELIN: Oh, nothing for the present. After that it will depend.

MARGUERITE: On what?

CHAUVELIN: On whom I see in the supper room at 1 o’clock precisely.

MARGUERITE: You will see the Scarlet Pimpernel, of course. But you do not know him.

CHAUVELIN: No, but I shall presently.

MARGUERITE: Sir Andrew will have warned him.

CHAUVELIN: I think not. When you parted from him after the minuet he stood and watched you, for a moment or 2, with a look that gave me to understand that something had happened between you. It was only natural, was it not, that I should make a shrewd guess, as to the nature of the “something”. I there upon engaged the young man in a long and animated conversation—we discussed Herr Mozart’s singular career—until a lady claimed his arm for supper.

MARGUERITE: Since then?

CHAUVELIN: I did not lose sight of him through supper. When we all came upstairs again Lady Portarles buttonholed him and started on the subject of pretty Mademoiselle Suzanne de Tournay. I knew he would not move til Lady Portarles had exhausted the subject, which will not be for another quarter of an hour at least, and it is 5 minutes to 1 now. (*He gestures off, indicating them to MARGUERITE.*) I think that I may safely expect to find the person I seek in the dining room, fair lady.

MARGUERITE: There may be more than one.

CHAUVELIN: Whoever is there, as the clock strikes 1, will be shadowed by 1 of my men; of these, 1, or perhaps 2, or even 3, will leave France tomorrow. 1 of these will be the “Scarlet Pimpernel”.

MARGUERITE: Yes?—And?

CHAUVELIN: I also, fair lady, will leave for France tomorrow. The papers found at Dover upon the person of Sir Andrew Ffoulkes speak of the neighborhood of Calais, of an inn which I know well, called “Le Chat Gris,” of a lonely place somewhere on the coast—the Pere Blanchard’s hut—which I must endeavor to find. All these places are given as the point where this meddlesome Englishman has bidden the traitor de Tournay and others to meet his emissaries. But it seems that he has decided not to send his emissaries, that “he will start himself tomorrow.” Now, 1 of these persons whom I shall see anon in the supper room, will be journeying to Calais, and I shall follow that person, until I tracked him to where those fugitive aristocrats await him; for that person, fair lady, will be the man whom I have sought for, for nearly a year, the man whose energies has outdone me, whose ingenuity has set me wondering—Yes! Me!—Who has seen a trick or 2 in my time—the mysterious and elusive Scarlet Pimpernel.

MARGUERITE (*pleadingly*): And Armand?

CHAUVELIN: Have I ever broken my word? I promise you that the day I lay hands on that meddlesome Englishman, St. Just will be here in England, safe in the arms of his charming sister. (*deep and elaborate bow. He exits. Long beat. MARGUERITE goes out, goes to a LORD.*)

MARGUERITE: Lord Fancourt, did you perceive who was in the dining-room just now besides Sir Percy Blakeney?

LORD (*startled*): Only the agent of the French Government, Monsieur Chauvelin, equally fast asleep in another corner. Why does your ladyship ask?

MARGUERITE: I know not... I ... Did you notice the time, when you were there?

LORD: It must have been about 5 or 10 minutes past 1... I wonder what your ladyship is thinking about. (*She thinks. He sits uncomfortably, stirring occasionally. Finally, tentatively*) Shall I find out if your ladyship's coach is ready?

MARGUERITE (*She starts. Apologetically*): Oh, thank you... thank you... if you would be so kind... I fear I am but sorry company... but I am really tired... and, perhaps, would be best alone... (*She sinks back into reverie. LORD goes. Long pause. LORD GRENVILLE enters and goes to her.*)

LORD GRENVILLE: Your coach is ready, and My Lord Sir Percy Blakeney attends your earliest convenience. (*She rises, takes his arm, and she is led back through the crowd to the edge of the stage. Various CHORUS wish her goodnight, milling about on the stage behind them. LORD GRENVILLE bows and walks off. CHAUVELIN slips over, looking amused.*)

MARGUERITE: Monsieur Chauvelin, my coach is outside; may I claim your arm? (*He bows and extends it. She takes it. They walk the edge of the stage to prolong. CHAUVELIN says nothing, pressing her to speak at last. Desperately*) Chauvelin, I must know what has happened?

CHAUVELIN (*With affected surprise*): What has happened, dear lady? Where? When?

MARGUERITE (*Energetic whisper*): You are torturing me, Chauvelin. I have helped you tonight... surely I have the right to know. What happened in the dining room just now?

CHAUVELIN: Quiet and peace reigned supreme, fair lady; at the hour I was asleep in one corner of one sofa, and Sir Percy Blakeney in another.

MARGUERITE: Nobody came into the room at all?

CHAUVELIN: Nobody?

MARGUERITE: Then we have failed, you and I?

CHAUVELIN: Yes! We have failed—perhaps...

MARGUERITE (*Pleadingly*): But Armand?

CHAUVELIN: Ah! Armand St. Just's chances hang on a thread... pray heaven, dear lady, that that thread may not snap.

MARGUERITE: Chauvelin, I worked for you, sincerely, earnestly, remember...

CHAUVELIN (*quietly*): I remember my promise. The day that the Scarlet Pimpernel and I meet on French soil, St. Just will be in the arms of his charming sister.

MARGUERITE (*with a shudder*): Which means that a brave man's blood will be on my hands.

CHAUVELIN: His blood, or that of your brother. Surely at the present moment you must hope, as I do, that the enigmatical Scarlet Pimpernel will start for Calais today—

MARGUERITE: I am only conscious of 1 hope, citizen.

CHAUVELIN: And that is?

MARGUERITE: That Satan, your master, will have need of you elsewhere, before the sun rises today.

CHAUVELIN (*with a bow*): You flatter me, citizen. (*He starts to head her off, both suddenly surrounded by various MALE CHORUS.*)

MARGUERITE (*With a pretty gesture of childish appeal*): Give me some hope, Monsieur Chauvelin.

CHAUVELIN (*Bows over her hand, and kisses it*): Pray heaven that the thread may not snap. (*He gives his signature, ironic smile. MARGUERITE gets swallowed up in a group of MALE CHORUS, which exits.*)

*Lights down.*

*END SCENE.*



## Act IV, Scene 1

(NOTE: in this scene, SIR PERCY and MARGUERITE **MAY NOT** touch except where indicated in stage directions.)

*Lights up. Outside the Blakeney mansion. Early morning, barely light. MARGUERITE enters, and stands looking out. Sighs deeply. Her hair is now down and she wears a lovely shawl over her gown. SIR PERCY enters, wearing an overcoat. He starts for the house.*

MARGUERITE: Sir Percy! *(He stops, but doesn't look at her.)*

SIR PERCY: At your service, Madame! *(He looks like he wants to continue leaving.)*

MARGUERITE: The air is deliciously cool, the moonlight peaceful and poetic, and the garden inviting. Will you not stay it awhile; the hour is not yet late, or is my company so distasteful to you, that you are in a hurry to rid yourself of it?

SIR PERCY *(placidly)*: Nay, Madame, but 'tis on the other foot the shoe happens to be, and I'll warrant you'll find the midnight are more poetic without my company. No doubt the sooner I remove the obstruction the better your ladyship will like it. *(He starts to go again.)*

MARGUERITE *(hurriedly)*: I protest you mistake me, Sir Percy. The estrangement, which alas! Has arisen between us, was none of my making, remember.

SIR PERCY *(coldly)*: Begad! You must pardon me there, Madame! My memory was always of the shortest. *(He looks her straight in the eyes with no hint of love.)*

MARGUERITE: Of the shortest, Sir Percy! Faith! How it must have altered! Was it 3 years ago or 4 that you saw me for 1 hour in Paris, on your way to the continent? When you came back 2 years later you had not forgotten me. *(SIR PERCY stiffens as though struck. 1 hand clenches.)*

SIR PERCY *(Frigidly)*: you desired my presence, Madame. I take it that it was not with the view to indulging in tender reminiscences.

MARGUERITE *(Stretches out her hand)*: Nay, Sir Percy, Why not? The present is not so glorious but that I should not wish to dwell a little in the past. *(SIR PERCY bows and ceremoniously kisses her fingertips.)*

SIR PERCY: I'faith, Madame, then you will pardon me, if my dull wits cannot accompany you there. *(He starts to leave again)*

MARGUERITE (*Tenderly*): Sir Percy.

SIR PERCY (*stops*): Your servant, Madame.

MARGUERITE (*Passionately vehement*): Is it possible that love can die? Methought that the passion which you once felt for me would outlast the span of human life. Is there nothing left of that love, Percy... which might help you... to bridge over that sad estrangement? (*SIR PERCY stiffens more, obstinately hardens eyes.*)

SIR PERCY: With what object, I pray you, Madame?

MARGUERITE: I do not understand you.

SIR PERCY (*Suddenly bitter. His emotions are surging, barely in check*): Yet 'tis simple enough. I humbly put the question to you, for my slow wits are unable to grasp the cause of this, your ladyship's sudden new mood. Is it that you have the taste to renew the devilish sport which you played so successfully last year? Do you wish to see me once more a lovesick suppliant at your feet, so that you might again have the pleasure of kicking me aside, like a troublesome lapdog?

MARGUERITE (*Stricken whisper*): Percy! I entreat you! Can we not bury the past?

SIR PERCY: Pardon me, Madame, but I understood you to say that your desire was to dwell in it.

MARGUERITE (*More tenderly*): Nay! I spoke not of **that** past, Percy! Rather did I speak of a time when you loved me still! And I... Oh! I was vain and frivolous; your wealth and position allured me: I married you, hoping in my heart that your great love for me would beget in me a love for you... but, alas!...

SIR PERCY: 24 hours after our marriage, Madame, the Marquis de St. Cyr and all his family perished on the guillotine, and the popular rumor reached me that it was the wife of Sir Percy Blakeney who helped to send them there.

MARGUERITE: Nay! I myself told you the truth of that odious tale.

SIR PERCY: not til after it had been recounted to me by strangers, with all its horrible details. (*Over the course of the next speech, SIR PERCY should be looking more and more emotional, suppressed, yet, glowing with intense passion, growing and glowing.*)

MARGUERITE (*Vehement, husky, in tears*): And you believed them then and there without a proof or question—you believed that I, whom you vowed you loved more than life, whom you professed you worshipped, that I could do a thing so base as these **strangers** chose to

recount. You thought I meant to deceive you about it all—that I ought to have spoken before I married you: yet, had you listened, I would have told you that up to the very morning on which St. Cyr went to the guillotine, I was straining every nerve, using every influence I possessed, to save him and his family. But my pride sealed my lips, when your love seemed to perish, as if under the knife of that same guillotine; Yet I would have told you how I was duped! Aye! I, whom that same popular rumor had endowed with the sharpest wits in France! I was tricked into doing these things, by men who knew how to play upon my love for an only brother, and my desire for revenge. Was it unnatural? (*Pause while she cries. When she speaks again, her voice is low, sweet, and extremely tender. At this point, SIR PERCY's passion breaks its bonds, and he makes as if to reach for her, but he must never touch her.*) Listen to the tale, Sir Percy. Armand was all in all to me! We had no parents, and brought one another up. He was my little father, and I, his tiny mother; we loved one another so. Then one day—do you mind me, Sir Percy? The Marquis de St. Cyr had my brother Armand thrashed—thrashed by his lacqueys—that brother whom I loved better than all the world! And his offence? That he, a plebeian, had dared to love the daughter of the aristocrat; for that he was waylaid and thrashed... thrashed like a dog within an inch of his life! Oh, how I suffered! His humiliation had eaten into my very soul! When the opportunity occurred and I was able to take my revenge, I took it. But I only thought to bring that proud marquis to trouble and humiliation. He plotted with Austria against his own country. Chance gave me knowledge of this; I spoke of it, but I did not know—how could I guess?—they trapped and duped me. When I realized what I had done, it was too late. (*SIR PERCY tries to master himself as he looks at her. Long pause. She looks up at him still, into his eyes, trying to hold him out of check.*)

SIR PERCY: It is perhaps a little difficult, Madame, to go back over the past. I have confessed to you that my memory is short, but the thought certainly lingered in my mind that, at the time of the Marquis's death, I entreated you for an explanation of those same noisome popular rumors. If that same memory does not, even now, play me a trick, I fancy that you refused me **all** explanation then, and demanded of my love a humiliating allegiance it was not prepared to give.

MARGUERITE: I wished to test your love for me, and it did not bear the test. You used to tell me that you drew the very breath of life but for me, and for love of me. (*SIR PERCY now gives up on even trying to reign himself in. His voice is trembling with intensity and passion.*)

SIR PERCY: And to probe that love, you demanded that I should forfeit mine honor, that I should accept without murmur or question, as a dumb and sumbissive slave, every action of my mistress. My heart overflowing with love and passion, I **asked** for no explanation—I **waited** for one, not doubting—only hoping. Had you spoken but one word, from you I would have accepted any explanation and believed it. But you left me without a word, beyond a bald confession of the actual horrible facts; proudly you returned to your brother's house,

and left me alone... for weeks... not knowing, now, in whom to believe, since the shrine, which contained my one illusion, lay shattered to earth at my feet.

MARGUERITE (*Draws closer, as if to touch, but don't touch. Sadly*): Aye! The madness of my pride! Hardly had I gone, already I had repented. But when I returned, I found you, oh, so altered! Wearing already that mask of somnolent indifference which you have never laid aside until... until now.

SIR PERCY (*Closes his eyes in a desperate attempt to regain control of himself. Icily*): Nay, Madame, it is no mask. I swore to you... once, that my life was yours. For months now it has been your plaything... it has served its purpose.

MARGUERITE (*Impulsively*): Sir Percy, heaven knows you have been at pains to make the task, which I had set myself, difficult to accomplish. You spoke of my mood just now; Well! We will call it that, if you will. I wished to speak to you... because... because I was in trouble... and had need... of your sympathy.

SIR PERCY: It is yours to command, Madame.

MARGUERITE (*Sighs. Her voice is shaking*): How cold you are! Faith! I can scarce believe that but a few months ago one tear in my eye had set you well-nigh crazy. Now I come to you... with a half-broken heart... and... and...

SIR PERCY (*Voice shaking himself, passionate face*): I pray you, Madame, in what way can I serve you?

MARGUERITE: Percy!—Armand is in deadly danger. A letter of his... rash, impetuous, as were all his actions, and written to Sir Andrew Ffoulkes, has fallen into the hands of a fanatic. Armand is hopelessly compromised... tomorrow, perhaps he will be arrested... after that the guillotine... unless... (*Sudden despairing wail*) Oh! It is horrible!... Horrible!... and you do not understand... you cannot... and I have no one to whom I can turn... for help... or even for sympathy... (*She breaks down crying*)

SIR PERCY (*Bitterly sarcastic*): And so, the murderous dog of the revolution is turning upon the very hands that fed it? (*She sobs. He looks at her and softens. Very gently*) Begad, Madame, will you dry your tears?... I never could bear to see a pretty woman cry, and I... (*He breaks free from his self-imposed restraint for a moment and reaches towards her. After a second, he forces himself to drop his arms. Colder, but still very gently*) Will you not turn to me, Madame, and tell me in what way I may have the honor to serve you? (*She forces herself to quiet her sobs, and looks at him. She extends her hand. He kisses it, but holds it a bit longer afterwards than necessary.*)

MARGUERITE (*Sweetly and simply*): Can you do aught for Armand? You have so much influence at court... so many friends...

SIR PERCY: Nay, Madame, should you not seek the influence of your French friend, Monsieur Chauvelin? His extends, if I mistake not, even as far as the Republican Government of France.

MARGUERITE: I cannot ask him, Percy... Oh! I wish I dared to tell you... but... but... he has put a price on my brother's head, which... (*SIR PERCY leans in, longing for her confidence. Long beat. When it doesn't come, he moves back, sighing.*)

SIR PERCY (*Marked coldness*): Faith, Madame, since it distresses you, we will not speak of it... as for Armand, I pray you have no fear. I pledge you my word that he shall be safe. Now, have I your permission to go? The hour is getting late, and...

MARGUERITE (*tenderly*): You will at least accept my gratitude?

SIR PERCY (*quietly*): It is too soon, Madame! I have nothing as of yet. The hour is late, and you must be fatigued. Your women will be waiting for you upstairs.

*He gestures off. She sighs, short and disappointed. She looks at him a moment. He's frozen in the same impassive attitude. She exits, looking defeated, dropping her handkerchief in the process. After she has gone, he looks in her direction with hopeless passion, picks up her handkerchief, kisses it, and tucks it into the interior of his jacket.*

*Lights down*

*END SCENE*

## Act IV, Scene 2

*Lights up. Blakeney mansion. About noon. MARGUERITE sits alone in the garden, turning over a small ring in her fingers, and thinking. She wears a lovely everyday dress. SUZANNE runs on, looking for MARGUERITE.*

SUZANNE (*call*): Chérie!--Chérie! Where are you? (*She sees MARGUERITE, runs over, puts her arms around MARGUERITE's neck, and gives her a girlish kiss.*) They told me you were in the garden, so I ran out to give you a surprise. His Royal Highness positively insisted to Maman that you and I must have a day together, that's why she agreed. You did not expect me quite so soon, did you, my darling little Margot Chérie?

MARGUERITE (*Discretely slips the ring onto her finger. Gaily*): Indeed, sweet one, it is delightful to have you all to myself, and for a nice whole day... you won't be bored?

SUZANNE: Oh! Bored! Margot, how **can** you say such a wicked thing. Why! When we were in the dear old convent together, we were always happy when we were allowed to be alone together.

MARGUERITE: And to talk secrets.

SUZANNE: Oh! How lovely your home is, Margot, darling, and how happy you must be!

MARGUERITE (*With a wistful sigh*): Aye, indeed! I ought to be happy--oughtn't I, sweet one?

SUZANNE: How sadly you say it, chérie... ah, well, I suppose now that you are a married woman you won't care to talk secrets with me any longer. Oh! What lots and lots of secrets we used to have at school! Do you remember?--some we did not even confide to Sister Theresa of the Holy Angels--though she was such a dear.

MARGUERITE (*merrily*): And now you have one all-important secret, eh, little one? Which you are forthwith going to confide in me. Nay, you need not blush, chérie. Faith, there's naught to be ashamed of! He is a noble and true man, and one to be proud of as a lover, and... as a husband.

SUZANNE (*softly*): Indeed, chérie, I am not ashamed, and it makes me very, very proud to hear you speak so well of him. I think Maman will consent, and I shall be--Oh! So happy--but, of course, nothing is to be thought of until Papa is safe... (*She prattles on, pantomime. MARGUERITE starts and clutches at the ring as she thinks. Beat. Reproachfully.*) You are not listening, chérie.

MARGUERITE (*forcing a smile*): Yes, yes, darling--indeed I am. I love to hear you talking... and your happiness makes me so very glad... have no fear, we will manage to propitiate Maman. Sir Andrew Ffoulkes is a noble English gentleman; he has money and position, the Comtesse will not refuse her consent... but... now, little one... tell me... what is the latest news about your father?

SUZANNE (*gleefully*): Oh! The best we could possibly hear. My Lord Hastings came to see Maman early this morning. He said that all is now well with dear Papa, and we may safely expect him here in England in less than 4 days.

MARGUERITE: ...yes...

SUZANNE: Oh, we have no fear now! You don't know, chérie, that that great and noble Scarlet Pimpernel himself has gone to save Papa. He has gone, chérie... actually gone... he was in London this morning; he will be in Calais, perhaps, tomorrow... where he will meet Papa... and then... and then...

MARGUERITE (*Freezes. Mutters distractedly*): ...Percy... Percy!

SUZANNE (*noticing MARGUERITE's attitude, looks alarmed*): But what is it, chérie? Are you ill, Marguerite? What is it?

MARGUERITE (*as if in a dream*): Nothing, nothing, child. Wait a moment... let me think... think!... you said... the Scarlet Pimpernel had gone today...?

SUZANNE: Marguerite, chérie, what is it? You frighten me...

MARGUERITE: It is nothing, child, I tell you... nothing... I must be alone a minute--and--dear one... I may have to curtail our time together today... I may have to go away--you'll understand?

SUZANNE: I understand that something has happened, chérie, and that you want to be alone. I won't be a hindrance to you. Don't think of me. My maid, Lucille, has not yet gone... we will go back together... don't think of me. (*She gives MARGUERITE a girlish, impulsive hug. She starts to exit. GROOM enters and hands MARGUERITE a letter. SUZANNE stays, worried about MARGUERITE.*)

MARGUERITE (*taking the letter*): What is that?

GROOM (*respectfully*): Just come by runner, my lady.

MARGUERITE (*turning it over*): Who sent it?

GROOM: The runner said, my lady, that his orders were to deliver this, and that your ladyship would understand from whom it came. (*MARGUERITE tears open the envelope, looks inside, and staggers. SUZANNE rushes forward and supports her.*)

MARGUERITE (*calmly*): Bring that runner here to me. He has not gone?

GROOM: No, my lady. (*exits*)

MARGUERITE (*to SUZANNE*): And you, child, run within. Tell Lucille to get ready. I fear that I must send you home, child, and--stay, tell one of the maids to prepare a travelling dress and cloak for me. (*SUZANNE kisses her and exits, running. GROOM enters with RUNNER. To RUNNER*) Who gave you this packet?

RUNNER: A gentleman, my lady, at "The Rose and Thistle" inn, opposite Charing Cross. He said you would understand.

MARGUERITE: at "The Rose and Thistle"? What was he doing?

RUNNER: He was waiting for the coach, your ladyship, which he had ordered.

MARGUERITE: The coach?

RUNNER: Yes, my lady. A special coach he had ordered. I understood from his man that he was posting straight to Dover.

MARGUERITE: That's enough. You may go. (*To GROOM*) My coach and the 4 swiftest horses in the stables, to be ready at once. (*Both bow and exit.*) What's to be done? What's to be done? Where to find him?--Oh, God! Grant me light. (*Her face sets and changes. Purposefully, she leaves for the house.*)

*Lights down*

*END SCENE*

*END of ACT IV*



## Act V, Scene 1

*There should be a smoky haze over the stage at this point. Stage dark, spotlight center, into which steps CHORUS.*

CHORUS: Marguerite Blakeney rushed off as fast as she could to Sir Andrew Ffoulkes, whom she knew from Chauvelin was one of the League, and whom she also knew was a good friend of Sir Percy's. She obtained his trust through absolute honesty, something she had not unbeneded herself to before. They rushed together to "The Fisherman's Rest," where they spent an anxious night while waiting out a storm that had come up. Ah, of the waiting, the suspicions of the good host, who can tell? Their only consolation was that Chauvelin could not set out for France either... (*exit*)

*Lights up. Interior of "Le Chat Gris". Very dirty and grimy in appearance. Any furniture should be damaged or scratched in some way. BROGARD and WIFE sit in the corner, he smoking, she stirring a pot of soup on the fire. On one wall there is scrawled in chalk "Liberté-Égalité-Fraternité!" in a very illiterate hand. Knocking. BROGARD mutters "Sacré Aristos" but does nothing. A second knock, much more insistent. He begrudgingly gets up and goes off. Seconds later, he returns with FFOULKES, now dressed as a lacquey, and MARGUERITE. FFOULKES gives him a pleasant smile.*

FFOULKES: English travelers, citoyen!

BROGARD: Saccrés Anglais! (*He spits at FFOULKES's feet, then goes back to his pipe.*)

MARGUERITE (*to FFOULKES*): Oh, Lud! What a dreadful hole! Are you sure this is the place?

FFOULKES (*dusts a chair for MARGUERITE with his handkerchief. She sits.*): Aye! 'Tis the place, sure enough, but I vow I never saw a more villainous hole.

MARGUERITE: Faith! (*scanning the room with her eyes.*) It certainly does not look inviting. (*beat.*)

FFOULKES (*to BROGARD*): Hey, my friend! We should like some supper... the Citoyenne there is concocting some delicious soup, I'll warrant, and my mistress has not tasted food for several hours.

BROGARD (*finally*): Sacrés Aristos! (*Painfully slowly, he prepares for the supper. MARGUERITE looks disgusted and horrified.*)

FFOULKES: Faith! Our host and hostess are not cheerful people. I would I could offer you a more hearty and more appetising meal... but I think you will find the soup eatable and the wine good; these people wallow in dirt, but live well as a rule.

MARGUERITE (*gently*): Nay! I pray you, Sir Andrew, be not anxious about me. My mind is scarce inclined to dwell on thoughts of supper. (*She picks at her food.*)

FFOULKES: Nay, Madame, I pray you, I beg of you to try and swallow some food--remember you have need of all your strength. (*She takes a sip of wine.*)

MARGUERITE: Nay, Sir Andrew, I do not like to see you standing. You have need of food just as much as I have. This creature will only think that I am an eccentric English woman eloping with her lacquey, if you'll sit down and partake of this semblance of supper beside me. (*They both pretend to eat to deceive one another. After a while*)

FFOULKES: Hey! My friend, do you see many of our quality along these parts? Many English travelers, I mean?

BROGARD (*beat.*): Heu!--Sometimes!

FFOULKES (*elaborately casual*): Ah! English travelers always know where they can get good wine, eh! My friend?--Now, tell me, my lady desired to know if by any chance you happen to have seen a great friend of hers, an English gentleman, who often comes to Calais on business; he is tall, and recently was on his way to Paris--My lady hoped to have met him in Calais. (*MARGUERITE won't look at either. She stares at the table.*)

BROGARD (*beat.*): Tall Englishman?--Today!--yes, yes, today. (*pantomimes "dresses very finely" since he doesn't know the English in question.*) Sacré Aristo! That tall Englishman!

MARGUERITE (*with a gasp of relief*): It's Sir Percy right enough, and not even in disguise! (*she sighs*) Oh! The foolhardiness of it! Quick, Sir Andrew! Ask the man when he went.

FFOULKES (*same manner*): Ah yes, my friend, my lord always wears beautiful clothes; the tall Englishman you saw, was certainly my lady's friend. And he has gone, you say?

BROGARD: He went... yes... but he's coming back... here--he ordered supper... (*FFOULKES quickly lays a restraining hand on MARGUERITE's arm so that she doesn't show her emotions.*)

MARGUERITE: Here! Here!--Did you say the English gentleman was coming back here?

BROGARD (*spits on the floor*): Heu! He ordered supper--he will come back... Sacré Anglais!

MARGUERITE (*lays a hand on BROGARD's arm*): But where is he now?--Do you know?

BROGARD (*shoves her hand off*): He went to get a horse and cart.

MARGUERITE: At what time did he go?

BROGARD (*very surly*): I don't know. I have said enough, Voyons, les Aristos!... He came today. He ordered supper. He went out,--He'll come back. Voilà! (*He exits. Door slams loudly. MARGUERITE makes as if to call him back.*)

FFOULKES: Faith, Madame! I think we'd better leave him alone. We shall not get anything more out of him, and we might arouse his suspicions. One never knows what spies may be lurking around these God-forsaken places.

MARGUERITE (*lightly*): What care I? Now I know my husband is safe, and that I shall see him almost directly!

FFOULKES (*alarmed*): Hush! The very walls have ears in France, these days. (*He checks the whole place.*)

MARGUERITE (*gaily, once he has sat down again.*): Are we alone, Monsieur, my lacquey? May we talk?

FFOULKES: As cautiously as possible!

MARGUERITE: Faith, man! But you wear a glum face! As for me, I could dance with joy! Surely there is no longer any cause for fear. Our boat is on the beach, and my husband will be here, under this very roof, within the next half an hour perhaps. Sure! There is naught to hinder us. Chauvelin and his gang have not yet arrived.

FFOULKES: Nay, Madame! That I fear we do not know.

MARGUERITE: What do you mean?

FFOULKES: He was there at Dover at the same time that we were.

MARGUERITE: Held up by the same storm, which kept us from starting.

FFOULKES: Exactly. But--I did not speak of it before, for I feared to alarm you--I saw him on the beach not 5 minutes before we embarked. At least, I swore to myself at the time that it was himself; he was disguised as a cure so that Satan, his own guardian, would scarcely have known him. But I heard him then, bargaining for a vessel to take him swiftly to Calais; and he must have set sail less than an hour after we did. (*Long beat. MARGUERITE is*

*horrified, FFOULKES compassionate for her distress. Earnestly*) Chauvelin knows of this inn, from the papers he stole and on landing will make directly for it.

MARGUERITE: He has not landed yet. We have an hour's start on him, and Percy will be here directly. We shall be mid-Channel ere Chauvelin has realized that we have slipped through his fingers. (*FFOULKES shakes his head sadly*)

MARGUERITE (*A little impatient*): Silent again, Sir Andrew? Why do you shake your head and look so glum?

FFOULKES: Faith, Madame, tis only because in making your rose-colored plans, you are forgetting the most important factor.

MARGUERITE (*More impatient now*): What in the world do you mean?--I am forgetting nothing... What factor do you mean?

FFOULKES (*quietly*): It stands 6 feet odd high and hath name Percy Blakeney.

MARGUERITE: I don't understand.

FFOULKES: Do you think that Blakeney would leave Calais without having accomplished what he set out to do?

MARGUERITE: You mean...?

FFOULKES: There's the old Count de Tournay...

MARGUERITE (*stricken murmur*): The Count...?

FFOULKES: And St. Just... and others...

MARGUERITE (*with a sob*): My brother! Heaven help me, but I fear I had forgotten.

FFOULKES: Fugitives as they are, these men at this moment await with perfect confidence and unshaken faith the arrival of the Scarlet Pimpernel, who has pledged his honor to take them safely across the Channel.

MARGUERITE: My brother!

FFOULKES (*proudly*): Sir Percy Blakeney would not be the trusted, honored leader of a score of English gentlemen if he abandoned those who placed their trust in him. As for breaking his word, the very thought is preposterous! (*MARGUERITE cries silently for a beat.*)

MARGUERITE: Faith, Sir Andrew, you are right, and I would not now shame myself by trying to dissuade him from doing his duty. As you say, I should plead in vain. (*fervently*) God grant him strength and ability to outwit his pursuers. He will not refuse to take you with him, perhaps, when he starts on his noble work; between you, you have cunning as well as valour! God guard you both! In the meantime I think we should lose no time. I still believe that his safety depends on his knowing Chauvelin is on his track.

FFOULKES: Undoubtedly. He has wonderful resources at his command. As soon as he is aware of his danger he will exercise more caution: his ingenuity is a veritable miracle.

MARGUERITE: Then, what say you to a voyage of reconnaissance in the village whilst I wait here against his coming!--You might come across Percy's track and thus save valuable time. If you find him, tell him to beware!--his bitterest enemy is on his heels!

FFOULKES: But this is such a villainous hole for you to wait in.

MARGUERITE (*calm, almost cheerful*): Nay, that I do not mind!--But you might ask our surly host if he could let me wait in another room, where I would be safer from the prying eyes of any chance traveller. Offer him some ready money, so that he should not fail to give me word the moment the tall Englishman returns. (*FFOULKES bows*)

FFOULKES (*calls off*): Hey! Friend Brogard! My lady friend would wish to rest here a while. Could you give her the use of another room? She would wish to be alone. (*He pulls out a coin purse and takes coins one by one, letting them clink significantly in his hand. BROGARD enters quickly, eyes fixed greedily on the gold. He points off, opposite to his entrance.*)

BROGARD (*with a grunt*): She can wait up there! It's comfortable, and I have no other room.

MARGUERITE: Nothing could be better. Give him the money, Sir Andrew; I shall be quite happy up there, and can see everything without being seen. (*She nods to BROGARD. He snatches the money and exits again. MARGUERITE turns to go. FFOULKES lays a gentle hand on her arm.*)

FFOULKES: May I entreat you, Madame, to do nothing rash. Remember this place is infested with spies. Do not, I beg of you, reveal yourself to Sir Percy, unless you are absolutely certain that you are alone with him.

MARGUERITE: Nay, that I can faithfully promise you. I would not jeopardize my husband's life, nor yet his plans, by speaking to him before strangers. Have no fear, I will watch my opportunity, and serve him in the manner I think he needs it most.

FFOULKES (*pulls his hand back*): I dare not kiss your hand, Madame, since I am your lacquey, but I pray you be of good cheer. If I do not come across Blakeney in half an hour, I shall return, expecting to find him here.

MARGUERITE: Yes, that will be best. We can afford to wait for half an hour. Chauvelin cannot possibly be here before that. God grant that either you or I may have seen Percy by then. Good luck to you, friend! Have no fear for me. (*She exits in the direction which BROGARD pointed to with a final soft smile at him. He nods farewell, and exits opposite.*)

*Lights down.*

*END SCENE.*

## Act V, Scene 2

*Lights up. The interior of “Les Chat Gris”. The table now has a holey tablecloth, a candle, a bottle of wine, and soup with accoutrements. Steps approach. CHAUVELIN enters, and calls for DEGAS, who enters likewise.*

CHAUVELIN: Hey! Citoyen Brogard! Hola! (*BROGARD shuffles out*)

BROGARD (*mutter*s): Sacré Sountaine! (*CHAUVELIN, dressed as a cure, opens his coat for a moment, displaying his tricolor cockade. BROGARD starts and bows nervously, now cringing and obsequious. CHAUVELIN looks at him with contempt.*)

CHAUVELIN (*imperiously*): A plate of soup and a bottle of wine, then clear out of here--understand? I want to be alone. (*BROGARD quickly sets another spot and exits. CHAUVELIN sits. DEGAS stands watch by the door.*) Not listening, is he?

DEGAS (*curtly*): No, Citoyen.

CHAUVELIN: The English schooner?

DEGAS: She was lost sight of at sundown, Citoyen, but was then making west, towards Cape Gris Nez.

CHAUVELIN: Ah!--good!--and now, about Captain Jutley?--What did he say?

DEGAS: He assured me that all the orders you sent him last week have been implicitly obeyed. All the roads which converge to this place have been patrolled night and day ever since: and the beach and cliffs have been most rigorously searched and guarded.

CHAUVELIN: Does he know where this “Pere Blanchard’s” hut is?

DEGAS: No, citoyen, nobody seems to know of it by that name. There are any amount of fisherman’s huts all along the course... but--

CHAUVELIN (*impatiently interrupts*): That’ll do. Now about tonight?

DEGAS: The roads and the beach are patrolled as usual, Citoyen, and Captain Jutley awaits further orders.

CHAUVELIN: Go back to him at once, then. Tell him to send reinforcements to the various patrols; and especially to those along the beach--you understand? The men are to keep the

sharpest possibly lookout for any stranger who may be walking, riding, or driving, along the road or the beach, more especially for a tall stranger, whom I need not describe any further, as probably he will be disguised; but he cannot very well conceal his height, except by stooping. You understand?

DEGAS: Perfectly, citoyen.

CHAUVELIN: As soon as any of the men have sighted a stranger, 2 of them are to keep him in view. The man who loses sight of the tall stranger, after he is once seen, will pay for his negligence with his life; but 1 man is to ride straight back here and report to me. Is that clear?

DEGAS: Absolutely clear, citoyen.

CHAUVELIN: Very well, then. Go and see Jutley at once. See the reinforcements start off for the patrol duty, then ask the captain to let you have a half a dozen more men and bring them here with you. You can be back in 10 minutes. Go--(*DEGAS starts to go. Beat. CHAUVELIN calls him back*) I had forgotten, the tall stranger may show fight. In any case, not shooting, remember, except as a last resort. I want the tall stranger alive... if possible. (*He laughs, creepily and wildly. DEGAS bows and exits. Left alone, CHAUVELIN rubs his hands and looks triumphant, then begins to eat his soup. Suddenly everything freezes, and we hear SIR PERCY singing "God Save the King". A banging door. SIR PERCY enters. He sees CHAUVELIN and tenses, eyes narrowing for just a microsecond before acting mock cheerful. He pretends he hasn't seen CHAUVELIN*)

SIR PERCY: Hello, there! No one about? Where's that fool Brogard? (*He pretends to notice CHAUVELIN for the first time. He goes over and pats CHAUVELIN's back just when he was about to swallow some soup. CHAUVELIN chokes and splutters.*) Odd's fish!... er... Monsieur Chauvelin... I vow I never thought of meeting you here. I am so demmed sorry... so very sorry... I seem to have upset you... eating soup, too... nasty, awkward thing, soup... er... Begad!--a friend of mine died once... er... choked... just like you... with a spoonful of soup. (*He smiles good-humoredly and a tad slyly*) Odd's life! Beastly hole this... ain't it now? (*He sits down without an invitation. Apologetically*) La! You don't mind? That fool Brogard seems to be asleep or something. (*He calmly helps himself to soup and wine.*)

CHAUVELIN (*offers his hand.*): I am indeed charmed to see you Sir Percy. You must excuse me--h'm--I thought you the other side of the Channel. Sudden surprise almost took my breath away.

SIR PERCY: La! It did that quite, didn't it--er--Monsieur--er--Chaubertin?

CHAUVELIN: Pardon me--Chauvelin.



SIR PERCY: I beg pardon--a thousand time. Yes--Chauvelin, of course. Er... I never could cotton to foreign names. (*laugh*) I didn't know that you... er... were in holy orders.

CHAUVELIN: I... er... hem...

SIR PERCY (*placidly*): But, la! I should have known you anywhere, although the wig and hat have changed you a bit.

CHAUVELIN: Do you think so? (*He starts checking his watch periodically from now on until indicated otherwise.*)

SIR PERCY: Lud! They alter a man so... but... Begad! I hope you don't mind my having made the remark?... Demmed bad form, making remarks... I hope you don't mind?

CHAUVELIN: No, no, not at all--hem! I hope Lady Blakeney is well.

SIR PERCY (*Pauses long enough to finish his soup and wine. Dryly*): Quite well, thank you. (*The 2 men pause again, measuring each other up.*)

CHAUVELIN (*elaborately casual*): You are on your way to Paris, Sir Percy?

SIR PERCY (*laughs*): Odd's life, no, only as far as Lille--Not Paris for me... beastly uncomfortable place, Paris, just now... eh, Monsieur Chaubertin... beg pardon... Chauvelin!

CHAUVELIN (*pointedly sarcastic*): Not for an English gentleman like yourself, Sir Percy, who takes no interest in the conflict that is raging there.

SIR PERCY: La! You see it's no business of mine, and our demmed government is all on your side of the business. Old Pitt daren't say "Bo" to a goose. You are in a hurry, sir. An appointment, perhaps... I pray you take no heed of me... my time's my own. (*drags his chair to the hearth.*) I am in no hurry, but, la! I don't want to spend any more time than I can help in this God-forsaken hole! But, begad! Sir, that watch of yours won't go any faster for all the looking you give it. You are expecting a friend, maybe?

CHAUVELIN: Aye--a friend!

SIR PERCY (*laughingly*): Not a lady--I trust, Monsieur l'Abbe, surely the holy church does not allow?... eh?... what! But, I say, come by the fire... it's getting demmed cold. Hey, Monsieur Chauvelin, tell me, I pray you, is your friend pretty? Demmed smart these little French women sometimes--what? But I protest I need not ask. In matters of taste the Church has never been backward... Eh? (*CHAUVELIN perks up. Tromp of boots from off-stage. SIR PERCY quickly empties the contents of the pepper into his snuffbox while CHAUVELIN is distracted. When done, he laughs stupidly*) Eh? Did you speak, sir?

CHAUVELIN (*startled, comes back to the present with a bump*): No. That is--as you were saying, Sir Percy--?

SIR PERCY: I was saying, that the shopkeep in Piccadilly has sold me better snuff this time than I have ever tasted. Will you honor me, Monsieur l'Abbe? (*He holds out the snuffbox. CHAUVELIN takes some and immediately has a violent sneezing fit. SIR PERCY calmly puts the box away and walks out.*)

*Lights down.*

END SCENE

## Act V, Scene 3

*CHAUVELIN has mostly recovered from his sneezing fit. DEGAS's voice heard calling a halt and boots stop. DEGAS enters.*

CHAUVELIN: The tall stranger--quick!--Did any of you see him?

DEGAS: Where, Citoyen?

CHAUVELIN: Here, man! Through that door! Not 5 minutes ago.

DEGAS: We saw nothing, Citoyen! The moon is not yet up, and...

CHAUVELIN (*concentrated fury*): and you are just 5 minutes too late, my friend.

DEGAS: Citoyen... I...

CHAUVELIN (*impatiently*): You did what I ordered you to do. I know that, but you were a precious long time about it. Fortunately, there's not much harm done, or it had fared ill with you, Citoyen Degas.

DEGAS: T-the tall stranger, Citoyen--

CHAUVELIN: Was here, in this room, 5 minutes ago, having supper at that table. Damn his impudence! For obvious reasons, I dared not tackle him alone. Brogard is too big a fool, and that cursed Englishman appears to have the strength of a bullock, and so he slipped away under your very nose.

DEGAS: He cannot go very far without being sighted, citoyen.

CHAUVELIN: Ah?

DEGAS: Captain Jutley sent 40 men as reinforcements for the patrol duty: 20 went down to the beach. He again assured me that the watch had been constant all day, and that no stranger could possibly get to the beach, or reach a boat, without being sighted.

CHAUVELIN: That's good:--Do the men know their work?

DEGAS: They have very clear orders, Citoyen: and I myself spoke to those who were about to start. They are to shadow--as secretly as possible--any stranger they might see, especially if he be tall, or stoop as if he would disguise his height.

CHAUVELIN (*eagerly*): In no case to detain such a person, of course. That impudent Scarlet Pimpernel would slip through clumsy fingers. We must let him get to the Pere Blanchard's hut now; there surround and capture him.

DEGAS: The men understand that, Citoyen, and also that, as soon as a tall stranger has been sighted, he must be shadowed, whilst 1 man is to turn straight back and report to you.

CHAUVELIN ( *rubs his hands, calming down now*): That is right.

DEGAS: I have further news for you, Citoyen.

CHAUVELIN: What is it?

DEGAS: A tall Englishman had a long conversation about 3 quarters of an hour ago with a cart driver, Raoul by name, who lives not 10 paces from here.

CHAUVELIN ( *impatient again*): Yes--and?

DEGAS: The conversation was all about a horse and cart, which the tall Englishman wished to hire, and which was to have been ready for him at 11 o'clock.

CHAUVELIN: It is past that now. Where does this Raoul live?

DEGAS: A few minutes' walk from this door.

CHAUVELIN: Send one of the ment to find out if the stranger has driven off in Raoul's cart.

DEGAS: Yes, citoyen. (*He exits. CHAUVELIN paces feverishly. Beat. DEGAS comes back with CART DRIVER.*)

CHAUVELIN: Is this the man?

DEGAS: No, citoyen. Raoul could not be found, so presumably the cart has gone with the stranger. But this man here seems to know something, which he is willing to sell for a consideration

CHAUVELIN (*disgusted*): Ah! (*He examines CART DRIVER, who is grimmy, and stooping with exhaustion.*) The citoyen tells me that you know something of my friend, the tall Englishman, whom I desire to meet. (*CART DRIVER shuffles forward, animated at the thought of money. CHAUVELIN steps back quickly, putting a handkerchief over his nose.*) Morbleu! Keep your distance, man.

CART DRIVER: Yes, sir. I and Raoul met a tall Englishman, on the road, close by here this evening.

CHAUVELIN: Did you speak to him?

CART DRIVER: He spoke to us, sir. He wanted to know if he could hire a horse and cart to go down along the St. Martin Road to a place he wanted to reach tonight.

CHAUVELIN: What did you say?

CART DRIVER (*irritated*): I did not say anything. Raoul, that--

CHAUVELIN (*roughly*): Cut that short, man, and go on with your story.

CART DRIVER (*spits on the ground before continuing*): He took the words out of my mouth, sir; when I was about to offer the wealthy Englishman my horse and cart, to take him wheresoever he chose, Raoul had already spoken, and offered his half-starved nag, and his broken-down cart.

CHAUVELIN: And what did the Englishman do?

CART DRIVER: He listened to Raoul, sir, and put his hand in his pocket right then and there, and took out a handful of gold, which he showed that slippery-tongued liar, telling him that all that would be his, if the horse and cart were ready for him by 11 o'clock.

CHAUVELIN: And, of course, the horse and cart were ready.

CART DRIVER: Well! They were ready for him in a manner, so to speak, sir. Raoul's nag was lame as usual; she refused to budge at first. (*with malicious glee*) It was only after a time and with plenty of kicks, that she at last could be made to move.

CHAUVELIN: Then they started?

CART DRIVER: Yes, they started about 5 minutes ago. I was disgusted with that stranger's folly. And an Englishman too!--He ought to have known Raoul's nag was not fit to drive.

CHAUVELIN: But if he had no choice?

CART DRIVER (*indignantly*): No choice, sir? Did I not repeat to him a dozen times, that my horse and cart would take him quicker, and more comfortably than Raoul's bag of bones. He would not listen. Raoul is such a liar, and has such insinuating ways. The stranger was deceived. If he was in a hurry, he would have had better value for his money by taking my cart.

CHAUVELIN (*peremptorily*): You have a horse and cart too, then?

CART DRIVER: Aye! That I have, sir, and if your honor wants to drive...

CHAUVELIN: Do you happen to know which way my friend went in Raoul's cart?

CART DRIVER (*thinks for a beat, pulls out a coin purse, and extracts some silver.*): This is what the tall stranger gave me, when he drove away with Raoul, for holding my tongue about him, and his doings.

CHAUVELIN (*impatiently*): How much is there there?

CART DRIVER: 20 francs, sir, and I have been an honest man all my life. (*CHAUVELIN snorts derisively*)

CHAUVELIN (*pulls a handful of gold out of his pocket, allowing it to jingle in his palm. Quietly*): How many gold pieces are there in the palm of my hand?

CART DRIVER (*obsequiously*): At least 5, I should say, sir.

CHAUVELIN: Enough, do you think, to loosen that honest tongue of yours?

CART DRIVER: What does your honor wish to know?

CHAUVELIN: Whether your horse and cart can take me to where I can find my friend the tall stranger, who has driven off in Raoul's cart?

CART DRIVER: My horse and cart can take your honor there, where you please.

CHAUVELIN: To a place called the Pere Blanchard's hut?

CART DRIVER (*surprised*): Your honor has guessed?

CHAUVELIN: You know the place? Which road leads to it?

CART DRIVER: The St. Martin Road, sir, then a footpath from there to the cliffs.

CHAUVELIN (*roughly*): You know the road?

CART DRIVER (*quietly*): Every stone, every blade of grass, sir. (*CHAUVELIN tosses the coins on the floor, and watches with contempt as CART DRIVER scrambles to pick them up.*)

CHAUVELIN: How soon can your horse and cart be ready?

CART DRIVER: They are ready now, sir.

CHAUVELIN: Where?

CART DRIVER: Not 10 meters from this door. Will you honor look?

CHAUVELIN: I don't want to see it. How far can you drive me in it?

CART DRIVER: As far as the Pere Blanchard's hut, sir, and further than Raoul's nag took your friend. I am sure that, not 2 leagues from here, we shall come across that wily Raoul, his nag, his cart, and the tall stranger all in a heap in the middle of the road.

CHAUVELIN: How far is the nearest village from here?

CART DRIVER: On the road which the Englishman took, Miquelon is the nearest village, not 2 leagues from here.

CHAUVELIN: There he could get fresh conveyance, if he wanted to go further.

CART DRIVER: He could--if he ever got so far.

CHAUVELIN: Can you?

CART DRIVER: Will your honor try?

CHAUVELIN: That is my intention, but remember, if you have deceived me, I shall tell off two of my most stalwart soldiers to give you such a beating, that your breath will perhaps leave your ugly body forever. But if we find my friend the tall Englishman, either on the road or at the Pere Blanchard's hut, there will be 10 more gold pieces for you. Do you accept the bargain?

CART DRIVER (*beat*): I accept.

CHAUVELIN: Go and wait outside then, and remember to stick to your bargain, or by Heaven, I will keep mine. (*CART DRIVER nods and exits. CHAUVELIN rubs his hands together in a satisfied manner. Beat.*) My coat and boots. (*DEGAS makes a gesture of common, and a SOLDIER brings CHAUVELIN clothing. CHAUVELIN takes off his coat and begins to change into his uniform.*) You, citizen, in the meanwhile, go back to Captain Jutley as fast as you can, and tell him to let you have another dozen men, and bring them with you along the St. Martin Road, where I daresay you will soon overtake the driver's cart with myself in it. There will be hot work presently, if I mistake not, in the Pere Blanchard's

hut. We shall corner our game there, I'll warrant, for this impudent Scarlet Pimpernel has had the audacity--or the stupidity, I hardly know which--to adhere to his original plans. He has gone to meet de Tournay, St. Just, and the other traitors, which for the moment, I thought, perhaps he did not intend to do. When we find them, there will be a band of desperate men at bay. Some of our men will, I presume, be put hors de combat. These royalists are good swordsmen, and the Englishman is devilish cunning, and looks very powerful. Still, we shall be 5 against 1 at least. You can follow the cart closely with your men, all along the St. Martin Road, through Miquelon. The Englishman is ahead of us, and not likely to look behind him. *(He chuckles evilly)* I shall have an interesting prisoner to deliver into your hands. *(He takes DEGAS's arm, who looks surprised, and slowly steers him towards the door.)* We won't kill him outright, eh, friend Degas? The Pere Blanchard's hut is--an I mistake not--a lonely spot upon the beach, and our men will enjoy a bit of rough fun there with the wounded fox. Choose your men well, friend Degas... of the sort who would enjoy that type of sport--eh? We must see the Scarlet Pimpernel wither a bit--what?--shrink and tremble, eh?... before we finally... *(He makes a gesture as if dropping the blade of a guillotine and laughs, low and creepily.)* Choose your men well, Citoyen Degas. *(They exit. MARGUERITE runs on from the direction in which she last exited.)*

MARGUERITE *(expressively passionate)*: Oh, you fiend... you fiend! *(She clutches her skirt, convulsively)* Well... I know what I have to do... if not to warn him, at least to die in his arms. *(She exits in the direction CHAUVELIN did a moment before, hurrying, but still cautious.)*

*Lights down.*

*END SCENE*



## Act V, Scene 4

*CHAUVELIN is in the cart with CART DRIVER. They are on the St. Martin Road, a seaside, cliff-y sort of place. Lights are milky and dark, suggesting after midnight.*

CHAUVELIN: ARE we a long way yet from Miquelon?

CART DRIVER (*placidly*): Not very far, sir.

CHAUVELIN (*sarcastically*): We have not yet come across your friend and mine, lying in a heap in the roadway.

CART DRIVER: Patience, sir, they are ahead of us. I can see the imprint of the cartwheels, driven by that traitor.

CHAUVELIN: You are sure of the road?

CART DRIVER: As sure as I am of the presence of those 10 gold pieces in your honor's pockets, which I trust will presently be mine.

CHAUVELIN: As soon as I have shaken hands with my friend that tall stranger, they will certainly be yours.

CART DRIVER (*beat. Suddenly*): What was that? (*The sound of horse's hooves. A little awed*) they are soldiers.

CHAUVELIN: Stop a moment, I want to hear.

HORSEMAN: Liberté, fraternité, égalité!

CHAUVELIN: What news? (*DEGAS and his men come up and stop behind HORSEMAN.*) You have seen the stranger?

HORSEMAN: No, Citoyen, we have seen no tall stranger; we came by the edge of the cliff.

CHAUVELIN: Then?

HORSEMAN: Less than a quarter of a league beyond Miquelon, we came across a rough construction of wood, which looked like the hut of a fisherman, where he might keep his tools and nets. When we first sighted it, it seemed to be empty, and, at first we thought there was nothing suspicious about, until we saw some smoke issuing through an aperture

at the side. I dismounted and crept close to it. It was then empty, but in one corner of the hut, there was a charcoal fire, and a couple of stools were also in the hut. I consulted with my comrades, and we decided that they should take cover with the horses, well out of sight, and that I should remain on the watch, which I did.

CHAUVELIN: Well! And did you see anything?

HORSEMAN: About half an hour later, I heard voices, citizen, and presently, 2 men came along towards the edge of the cliff; they seemed to me to have come from the Lille Road. 1 was young, the other quite old. They were talking in a whisper, to one another, and I could not hear what they said. The 2 men entered presently into the hut, and I crept nearer then. (*CHAUVELIN gives a triumphant chuckle.*) The hut is very roughly built, and I caught snatches of the conversation.

CHAUVELIN: Yes?--quick!--what did you hear?

HORSEMAN: The old man asked the younger one if he were sure that was the right place. "Oh, yes," he replied, "'tis the place sure enough" and by the light of the charcoal fire he showed his companion a paper, which he carried. "Here is the plan," he said, "Which he gave me before I left London. We were to adhere strictly to that plan, unless I had contrary orders, and I have had none. Here is the road we followed, see... here the fork... here we cut across the St. Martin Road... and here is the footpath which brought us to the edge of the cliff." I must have made a slight noise then, for the young man came to the door of the hut and peered anxiously all around him. When he again joined his companion, they whispered so low, that I could no longer hear them.

CHAUVELIN: Well?--And?

HORSEMAN: There were 6 of us altogether, patrolling that part of the beach, so we consulted together, and thought it best that 4 should remain behind and keep the hut in sight, and I and my comrade rode back at once to make report of what we had seen.

CHAUVELIN: You saw nothing of the tall stranger?

HORSEMAN: Nothing, Citizen.

CHAUVELIN: If your comrades see him, what would they do?

HORSEMAN: Not lose sight of him for a moment, and if he showed signs of escape, or any boat came in sight, they would close in on him, and, if necessary, they would shoot; The firing would bring the rest of the patrol to the spot. In any case, they would not let the stranger go.

CHAUVELIN (*savagely*): Aye! But I did not want the stranger hurt--not just yet, but there, you've done your best. The Fates grant that I may not be too late...

HORSEMAN: We met half a dozen men just now, who have been patrolling this road for several hours.

CHAUVELIN: Well?

HORSEMAN: They have seen no stranger either.

CHAUVELIN: Yet he is on ahead somewhere, in a cart or else... Here! There is not a moment to lose. How far is that hut from here?

HORSEMAN: About a couple of leagues, Citoyen.

CHAUVELIN: You can find it again?--at once?--without hesitation?

HORSEMAN: I have absolutely no doubt, Citoyen.

CHAUVELIN: The footpath, to the edge of the cliff--Even in the dark?

HORSEMAN (*firmly*): It is not a dark night, Citoyen, and I know I can find my way.

CHAUVELIN: Fall in behind then. Let your comrade take both your horses back to Calais. You won't want them. Keep beside the cart, and direct the driver to drive straight ahead; then stop him, within a quarter of a league of the footpath; see that he takes the most direct road. (*SOLDIERS and DEGAS all obey.*)

*Lights down.*

*END SCENE.*

## Act V, Scene 5

(*CHAUVELIN and SOLDIERS with DEGAS stand around on a beach, cliff behind them. CART DRIVER sits patiently in the cart.*)

CHAUVELIN (*peremptorily whispers*): Now, where is the Pere Blanchard's hut?

HORSEMAN: About 800 meters from here, along the footpath, and half the way down the cliff.

CHAUVELIN: Very good. You shall lead us. Before we begin to descend the cliff, you shall creep down to the hut, as noiselessly as possibly, and ascertain if the traitor royalists are there. Do you understand?

HORSEMAN: I understand, Citoyen.

CHAUVELIN (*Impressively and dryly*): Now listen attentively, all of you, for after this we may not be able to exchange another word, so remember every syllable I utter, as if your very lives depend on your memory. Perhaps they do.

DEGAS: We listen, citoyen, and a soldier of the Republic never forgets an order.

CHAUVELIN: You, who have crept up to the hut, will try to peep inside. If an Englishman is there with those traitors, a man who is tall above the average, or who stoops as if he would disguise his height, then give a sharp, quick whistle as a signal to your comrades. All of you then seize one of the men there, before they have time to draw their firearms; if any of them struggle, shoot at their legs or arms, but on no account kill the tall man. Do you understand?

ALL: We understand, Citoyen.

CHAUVELIN: The man who is tall above average is probably also strong above the average; it will take 4 or 5 of you at least to overpower him. (*beat.*) If the royalist traitors are still alone, which is more than likely to be the case, then warn your comrades who are lying in wait there, and all of you creep and take cover behind the rocks and boulders round the hut, and wait there, in dead silence, until the tall Englishman arrives; then only rush the hut, when he is safely within its doors. But remember that you must be as silent as the wolf is at night, when he prowls around the pens. I do not wish those royalists to be on the alert--the firing of a pistol, a shriek or a call on their part would be sufficient, perhaps, to warn the tall personage, to keep clear of the cliffs, and of the hut, and it is the tall Englishman whom it is your duty to capture tonight.

ALL: You shall be implicitly obeyed, Citoyen.

CHAUVELIN: Then get along as noiselessly as possible, and I will follow you. (*They go, one by one, creeping off silently*)

DEGAS: What about the cart driver, Citoyen?

CHAUVELIN: Ah, yes! I had forgotten about the cart driver. (*He turns to CART DRIVER. Still former manner*) Here, you... whatever your name may be.

CART DRIVER: Marc St. Jean, an it please your honor.

CHAUVELIN: It does not please me to hear your voice, but it does please me to give you certain orders, which you will find it wise to obey.

CART DRIVER: An it please you--

CHAUVELIN: Hold your confounded tongue. You shall stay here, do you hear? With your horse and cart until our return. You are on no account to utter the faintest sound, or even to breathe louder than you can help, nor are you, on any consideration whatever, to leave your post, until I give you orders to do so. Do you understand?

CART DRIVER: B-but... sir...

CHAUVELIN: There is no question or "but" or of any argument. If, when I return, I do not find you here, I most solemnly assure you that, wherever you may try to hide yourself, I can find you, and that punishment swift, sure and terribly, will sooner or later overtake you. Do you hear me?

CART DRIVER: B-but...

CHAUVELIN: I said, do you hear me?

CART DRIVER: I heard your honor, and I swear by my grandparents' souls, I would obey you most absolutely, and that I would not move from this place until your honor allowed it; but remember, sir, I am a poor man; my nerves are not as strong as those of a young soldier. If midnight marauders should come prowling round this lonely road, I might scream or run in my fright! And is my life to be forfeit, is some terrible punishment to come on my poor head for that which I really cannot help? (*beat*)

CHAUVELIN (*roughly*): Will your horse and cart be safe alone, here, do you think?

DEGAS: I fancy, Citoyen, that they will be safer here without that cowardly, dirty cart driver than with him. There seems to be no doubt that, if he gets scared, he will either make a bolt of it, or shriek his head off.

CHAUVELIN: But what am I to do with the brute?

DEGAS: Will you send him back to Calais, Citoyen?

CHAUVELIN: No, for we shall want him to drive back the wounded presently. (*beat*) Well, you lazy, miserable coward, you had better shuffle along behind us. Here, Citoyen Degas, tie this hanky tightly around the fellow's mouth. (*quickly, they do.*) Quick! We have already lost much valuable time. (*They go.*)

Lights Down.

*END SCENE.*

## Act V, Scene 6

*Lights as previous. The SOLDIERS are all at their stations. MARGUERITE creeps up, trying to get to the hut. CHAUVELIN catches her, and puts a hand over her mouth quickly. Spotlight on them. By this point, she is very bedraggled and clearly exhausted.*

CHAUVELIN (*whispering*): A woman! By all the saints in the calendar. We cannot let her loose, that's certain. I wonder now-- (*beat. He chuckles evilly. With affected gallantry*) Dear me! Dear me! This is indeed a charming surprise. (*He snakes one arm around her waist to hold her prisoner. With the other, he takes her hand and kisses the fingertips. She chokes on a tragic sob, and collapses against him, all reserves exhausted. A SOLDIER approaches.*)

SOLDIER: There are 4 men in there, Citoyen; They are sitting by the fire, and seem to be waiting quietly.

CHAUVELIN: The hour?

SOLDIER: Near 2 o'clock.

CHAUVELIN: The tide?

SOLDIER: coming in quickly.

CHAUVELIN: The schooner?

SOLDIER: Obviously an English one, lying some 3 km out. But we cannot see her boat.

CHAUVELIN: Have the men taken cover?

SOLDIER: Yes, Citoyen.

CHAUVELIN: They will not blunder?

SOLDIER: They will not stir til the tall Englishman comes, then they will surround and overpower the 5 men.

CHAUVELIN: Right. And the cart driver?

SOLDIER: He's gagged, and his legs strapped together. He cannot move or scream.

CHAUVELIN: Good. Then have your gun ready, in case you want it. Get close to the hut and leave me to look after the lady. (*SOLDIER obeys.*) Before my hand is removed from your pretty mouth, fair lady, I think it right to give you a small word of warning. What has procured me the honor of being followed across the Channel by so charming a companion, I cannot, of course, conceive, (*MARGUERITE gives him a look of hatred, eyes filled with tears.*) but, if I mistake not, the purpose of this flattering attention is not one that would commend itself to my vanity and I think I am right in surmising, moreover, that the first sound which your pretty lips would utter, as soon as the cruel gag is removed, would be one that would give warning to the cunning fox, which I have been at pains to track to his lair. Inside that hut, if I am not mistaken, your brother Armand St. Just, waits with that traitor de Tournay and two other men unknown to you, for the arrival of the mysterious rescuer, whose identity has for so long puzzled our Committee of Public Safety--the audacious Scarlet Pimpernel. No doubt if you scream, if there is a scuffle here, if shots are fired, it is more than likely that the same long legs that brought this scarlet enigma here, will as quickly take him to some place of safety. The purpose then, for which I have travelled all these miles, will remain unaccomplished. On the other hand it only rests with yourself that your brother--Armand--shall be free to go off with you tonight if you like, to England, or any other place of safety. What I want you to do to assure Armand's safety is a very simple thing, dear lady. To remain--on this spot, without uttering a sound, until I give you leave to speak. (*She stiffens defiantly. He chuckles low and evilly*) Ah! But I think you will obey, for let me tell you that if you scream, nay! If you utter one sound, or attempt to move from here, my men--there are 30 of them about--will seize St. Just, de Tournay, and their 2 friends, and shoot them here--by my orders--before your eyes. (*She goes limp, and a despairing whine comes from her throat.*) Nay, fair lady, you can have no interest in anyone save St. Just, and all you need to do for his safety is remain where you are, and to keep silent. My men have strict orders to spare him in every way. As for that enigmatic Scarlet Pimpernel, what is he to you? Believe me, no warning from you could possibly save him. And now dear lady, let me remove this unpleasant coercion which has been placed over your mouth. You see I wish to make you perfectly free, in the choice you are about to make. (*She is frozen as he removes his hand from her mouth. Suddenly, the voice of SIR PERCY is heard singing "God Save the King!"*)

MARGUERITE (*Shrieks hysterically*): Armand! Armand! For God's sake fire! Your leader is near! He is coming! He is betrayed! Armand! Armand! Fire in heaven's name! Percy, my husband, for God's sake fly! Armand! Armand! Why don't you fire?

CHAUVELIN (*hisses*): One of you stop that woman screaming. (*DEGAS gags her. She falls, completely spent*) Into it, my men, and let no man escape from that hit alive! (*SOLDIERS go to the door, then stop.*) What is the meaning of this?

HORSEMAN: I think, Citoyen, that there is no one there now.



CHAUVELIN (*Thunders*): you have not let those 4 men go? I ordered you to let no man escape alive!--quick, after them all of you! Quick, in every direction! (*They obey.*  
CHAUVELIN *turns to SERGEANT. Viciously*) You and your men will pay with your lives for this blunder, citoyen sergeant, and you too Citoyen Degas, for disobeying my orders.

SERGEANT (*sullenly*): You ordered us to wait, Citoyen, until the tall Englishman arrived and joined the 4 men in the hut. No one came.

CHAUVELIN: But I ordered you just now, when the woman screamed, to rush in and let no one escape.

SERGEANT: But, Citoyen, the 4 men who were there before had been gone some time, I think...

CHAUVELIN: You think?--You?--And you let them go-- (*He goes speechless from rage.*)

SERGEANT: You ordered us to wait, Citoyen, and to implicitly obey your commands on pain of death. We waited. I heard the men creep out of the hut, not many minutes after we took cover, and long before the woman screamed.

DEGAS (*suddenly*): Hark! (*sounds of gunshots*)

CHAUVELIN: Which way did they go?

SERGEANT: I could not tell, Citoyen, they went straight down the cliff first, then disappeared behind some boulders.

CHAUVELIN: Hush! What was that? (*sounds of the splash of oars.*) The schooner's boat!

DEGAS (*quietly*): The schooner, Citoyen. She's off.

HORSEMAN (*runs up*): There was a note in the hut! The Scarlet Pimpernel is planning to make for the creek opposite "Le Chat Gris"!

CHAUVELIN: Hurry then! After him! 1000 francs to each man who gets there before the Englishman. (*2 SOLDIERS are standing guard over MARGUERITE. Spitefully*) It is no use mounting a guard over a woman who is half dead, when you have allowed 5 men who are very much alive to escape. Go find the cart. (*they obey*) Ah! By-the-bye! Where is the cart driver?

DEGAS: Close by here, Citoyen. I gagged him and tied his legs together as you commanded.

CHAUVELIN (*viciously*): Bring the cowardly brute here. (*DEGAS obeys. To CART DRIVER*) I suppose you have a good memory for bargains?

CART DRIVER: Y-yes, s-sir...

CHAUVELIN: You remember then, the one we made earlier? And what was to happen to you if I didn't find my friend?

CART DRIVER: P-p-please, your honor...

CHAUVELIN (*viciously*): Do you remember?

CART DRIVER: Y-yes... (*CHAUVELIN calls the 2 SOLDIERS over.*)

CHAUVELIN: Take him away. Give him the soundest beating of his life. Only... (*regretful sigh*) Don't kill him.

2 SOLDIERS: We will obey, Citoyen. (*They take him away. He howls with pain from off stage.*)

CHAUVELIN: Come, Citoyen Degas. You may yet redeem your life, and we have business back in Calais. (*CHAUVELIN goes over to MARGUERITE, who is struggling to rise. He again kisses her hand with fake gallantry*) I must regret, fair lady, that circumstances, over which I have no control, compel me to here part ways with you. Fear not, however. Dear friend Cyrus will protect you. I, myself, must now very reluctantly leave you. I fear I will not see you at the Prince of Wales's garden party? Pity. Remember me to Sir Percy Blakeney. Au revior, fair lady. (*Ironical bow. He and DEGAS exit.*)

Lights down.

*END SCENE*

## Act V, Scene 7

*Lights as previously. MARGUERITE is still on the ground, dazed. SIR PERCY enters as CART DRIVER, no longer stooping.*

SIR PERCY: Damn! Odd's fish, but those soldiers know how to use their belt buckles. (*Rueful chuckle. He now sounds like SIR PERCY again*)

MARGUERITE: P-percy?

SIR PERCY: Zounds! I'm as weak as a rat!

MARGUERITE: Percy! Where are you? I'm here! Percy! (*She starts up, looking around eagerly. SIR PERCY smiles his own smile at her. She sees him, confusion crossing her face. He holds out his arms. Ecstatically, she runs to him and they embrace.*) Percy! Thank God! You're alive!

SIR PERCY: Yes, alive and well. (*He chuckles again.*) Not quite as well I would like, but... (*He staggers slightly. She tries to support him, and they end up leaning on a rock together.*) Odd's life! But I marvel whether it has ever happened before, that an English gentleman allowed himself to be licked by a demmed foreigner, and made no attempt to give as good as he got.

MARGUERITE: Oh, for a drop of water on this awful beach!

SIR PERCY (*gentle smile*): Nay, m'dear, personally I should prefer a drop of good French brandy! An you'll dive into the pocket of this dirty old garment, you'll find my flask. (*She gets it. He drinks some and has her drink some also.*) La! That's better now! Eh! Little woman? Heigh-ho! But this is a queer rig-up for Sir Percy Blakeney, Baronet to be found by his lady, and no mistake. Begad! I haven't been shaved for nearly 20 hrs; I must look a disgusting object. (*He smiles at MARGUERITE and wipes off as much of the dirty makeup as possible with his handkerchief. Their eyes meet.*)

MARGUERITE (*embarrassed*): Percy, if you only knew...

SIR PERCY (*gently*): I do know, dear... everything.

MARGUERITE: And can you ever forgive?

SIR PERCY: I have naught to forgive, sweetheart; your heroism, your devotion, which I, alas! So little deserved, have more than atoned for that unfortunate episode at the ball.

MARGUERITE (*whispers*): Then you knew?... all the time...

SIR PERCY (*tenderly*): Yes! I knew... all the time... But, begad! Had I but known what a noble heart yours was, my Margot, I should have trusted you, as you deserved to be trusted, and you would not have had to undergo the terrible sufferings of the past few hours, in order to run after a husband, who has done so much that needs forgiveness. (*Beat. His signature smile returns*) It is a case of the blind leading the lame, sweetheart, is it not? Odd's life! But I do not know which are the more sore, my shoulders or your little feet. (*He kisses her.*)

MARGUERITE (*with sudden terror, remorsefully*): But Armand...

SIR PERCY (*tenderly once more*): Oh! Have no fear for Armand, sweetheart, did I not pledge you my word that he should be safe? He, with de Tournay and the others are even now on the 'Day Dream'.

MARGUERITE (*gasps*): But how? I do not understand.

SIR PERCY (*laughingly*): Yet, 'tis simple enough, m'dear. You see! When I found that that brute Chauvelin meant to stick to me like a leech, I thought the best thing I could do, as I could not shake him off, was to take him along with me. I had to get to Armand and the others somehow, and all the roads were patrolled, and everyone on the lookout for your humble servant. I knew that when I slipped through Chauvelin's fingers at the 'Chat Gris', that he would lie in wait for me here, whichever way I took. I wanted to keep an eye on him and his doings, and a British head is as good as a French one any day. (*gayly*) Dressed as that dirty old cart driver, I knew I should not be recognized. I had met Raoul in Calais earlier in the evening. For a few gold pieces he supplied me with this rig-out, and undertook to bury himself out of sight of everybody, whilst he lent me his cart and nag.

MARGUERITE: But if Chauvelin had discovered you! Your disguise was good... but he is so sharp.

SIR PERCY (*quietly*): Odd's fish! Then certainly the game would have been up. I could but take the risk. I know human nature pretty well by now (*His voice takes on a tinge of sadness*) and nowhere is prejudice so strong just now as in France. I fancy that I contrived well enough to make myself look about as loathsome an object as it is possible to conceive.

MARGUERITE: Yes!--and then?

SIR PERCY: Zooks!--then I carried out my little plan: that is to say, at first I only determined to leave everything to chance, but when I heard Chauvelin giving his orders to the soldiers, I thought that fate and I were going to work together after all. I reckoned on

the blind obedience of the soldiers. Chauvelin had ordered them on pain of death not to stir until the tall Englishman came. Degas had thrown me down in a heap quite close to the hut; the soldiers took no notice of the cart driver, who had driven Citoyen Chauvelin to the spot. I managed to free my hands from the ropes, with which the brute had trussed me; I always carry pencil and paper with me wherever I do, and I hastily scrawled a few important instructions on a scrap of paper; then I looked about me. I crawled up to the hut, under the very noses of the soldiers, who lay under cover without stirring, just as Chauvelin had ordered them to do, then I dropped my little hote into the hut through a chink in the wall, and waited. In this note I told the fugitives to walk noiselessly out of the hut, creep down the cliffs, keep to the left until they came to the first creek, to give a certain signal, when the boat of the 'Day Dream', which lay in wait not far out to sea, would pick them up. They obeyed implicitly, fortunately for them and me. The soldiers who saw them were equally obedient to Chauvelin's orders. They did not stir! I waited for nearly half an hour; when I knew that the fugitives were safe I gave the signal, which caused so much stir.

MARGUERITE: But those brutes struck you!

SIR PERCY (*gently*): Well! That could not be helped, whilst my little wife's fate was so uncertain, I had to remain here by her side. (*Merrily*) Odd's life! Never fret! Chauvelin will lose nothing by waiting, I warrant! Wait til I get him back to England!--La! He shall pay for the thrashing he gave me with compound interest, I promise you. (*MARGUERITE laughs and snuggles up to him. Stealthy footsteps are heard.*)

MARGUERITE (*alarmed whisper*): What's that?

SIR PERCY (*Mutters back*): Oh! Nothing, m'dear, only a trifle you happen to have forgotten... my friend, Ffoulkes...

MARGUERITE: Sir Andrew!

SIR PERCY (*laughs merrily*): Aye! You had forgotten him, hadn't you, m'dear? Fortunately, I met him, not far from the 'Chat Gris', before I had that interesting supper party with my friend Chauvelin... Odd's life! But I have a score to settle with that young reprobate!--but in the meanwhile, I told him of a very long, very circuitous road which Chauvelin's men would never suspect, just about the time when we are ready for him, eh, little woman?

MARGUERITE (*astonished*): And he obeyed?

SIR PERCY: Without word of question. See, here he comes. He was not in the way when I did not want him, and now he arrives in the nick of time. Ah! He will make pretty little Suzanne a most admirable and methodical husband. (*FFOULKES sneaks cautiously down to them.*)

FFOULKES: Blakeney! Blakeney! Are you there? (*He sees SIR PERCY and looks confused.*)

SIR PERCY (*laughingly*): Here I am, friend! All alive! Thought I do look a begad scarecrow in these demmed things.

FFOULKES: Zooks! Of all the-- (*He sees MARGUERITE and shuts his mouth quickly*)

SIR PERCY (*calmly*): Yes! Of all the... hem!... my friend!--I have not yet had time to ask you what you were doing in France, when I ordered you to remain in London? Insubordination? What? Wait til my shoulders are less sore, and, by God, see the punishment you'll get.

FFOULKES (*with a merry laugh*): Odd's fish! I'll bear it, seeing that you are alive to give it... would you have had me allow Lady Blakeney to do the journey alone? But, in the name of heaven, man, where did you get these extraordinary clothes?

SIR PERCY: Lud! They are a bit quaint, ain't they? But, odd's fish! Now that you are here, Ffoulkes, we must lose no more time: that brute Chauvelin may send someone to look after us.

MARGUERITE: But how can we get back? The roads are full of soldiers between here and Calais, and...

SIR PERCY: We are not going back to Calais, sweetheart, but just to the other side of Gris Nez, not half a league from here. The boat of the 'Day Dream' will meet us there.

MARGUERITE: The boat of the 'Day Dream'?

SIR PERCY (*with a laugh*): Yes! Another little trick of mine. I should have told you that when I slipped that note into the hut, I also added another one for Armand, which I directed him to leave behind, and which has sent Chauvelin and his men running full tilt back to the 'Chat Gris' after me; but that the first little not contained my real instructions, including those to old Briggs. He had my orders to go further to sea, and then towards the west. When well out of sight of Calais, he will send the galley to a little creek he and I know of, just beyond Gris Nez. The men will look out for me--we have a preconcerted signal and we will all be safely abroad whilst Chauvelin and his men solemnly sit and watch the creek which is 'just opposite the 'Chat Gris'".

MARGUERITE: The other side of Gris Nez? (*She tries to stand and collapses against him again.*) But I... I cannot walk, Percy.

SIR PERCY (*simply*): I will carry you, dear. The blind leading the lame, you know.

FFOULKES: I can also... (*SIR PERCY just looks at him, and he trails off.*)

SIR PERCY: When you and she are both safely on board the 'Day Dream' and I feel that Mademoiselle Suzanne's eyes will not greet me in England with reproachful looks, then it will be my turn to rest. (*FFOULKES nods. SIR PERCY picks up MARGUERITE bride-style and they kiss.*)

Lights down. Spotlight on SIR PERCY and MARGUERITE, fading last.

*END SCENE*

*END of ACT V*

*Finis*